

Post-War Italian Cinema

American Intervention, Vatican Interests

Daniela Treveri Gennari

Post-War Italian Cinema

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St Peter's square as the backdrop for Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg's encounter in *La dolce vita* (1960), courtesy Reporters Associati.

To Luca and Giulio

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Introduction

For post-war Italian cinema the after-shocks of military defeat to the American superpower continue to reverberate. In April 2008 the magazine *L'Espresso* revealed that Italy State television Rai, while owning Rai Cinema, the major co-producer of Italian films, seemed to be showing a very low number of Italian films on its own channels, Rai 1, Rai 2 and Rai 3. Compared to the situation in 1948 little had changed. In fact, the majority of films screened then in Italian cinemas were American and the number of U.S. films shown in movie theatres indicates that the American film industry played a key role in the development of Italian national cinema. Despite being up against such a powerful adversary as the U.S., which was supported at times by the Catholic Church, the Italian film industry managed to hold its own.

This book investigates the cultural and ideological influences shaping the Italian cinema industry during the period 1945–1960. The role of the United States, the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, the Italian Government and the Christian Democrat Party are examined in particular.

The Italian cinema of the post-1945 era has already been the subject of several studies. No studies, though, have been produced which have shown the Vatican and American influences working together with the Italian film industry. In addition to exploring this link, I wanted to challenge the traditional approach to Italian film criticism, dominated as it is by auteur theory or historiography. Instead I wanted to establish a new methodology which embraces neglected areas of post-war Italian cinema. It is my intention to break down the traditional concept of national cinema by looking at both Hollywood and Italian-produced films screened in Italy. Also, by investigating the production and reception of popular cinema, I have taken a step forward in the study of a particular era of Italian film history. Given the difficulty of obtaining specific archival material in Italy, there are two compromises I had to make. Firstly in relation to State censorship, my unsuccessful attempts to investigate in greater depth how the Dipartimento dello Spettacolo intervened into the film industry has forced me to confine my research to legal matters and exhibitors' intervention. While this has restricted the area of study, it also has driven me to more specific

issues, for example the close relationship between American production companies and Italian exhibitors and the Christian Democratic presence in cinema legislative matters. Secondly I have felt the need to reconstruct the superstructure of the film industry in Chapters 1 to 5 before analysing the case studies. Since it would have been impossible to develop my argument by dedicating more space to the films without considering carefully the most significant aspects of the film industry (production, distribution and reception), I was forced to limit the case studies to the last chapter, as an indicative example of a body of work which still needs to be investigated. I could not do that without first setting the historical dimension of the film industry in Italy, exploring the official documents issued by American primary sources and from the Vatican, and examining the many documents found in the Catholic Exhibitors' Archive, which had yet to be discussed thoroughly in the academic domain.

The introductory chapter looks at the American myth and its influence in Italian society. It also traces—through an analysis of secondary sources—the role of the Church in Italian cinema and the relationship between the Vatican and the American film industry. Chapter 2 examines American political and cultural ideology of the post-1945 era, especially in terms of the concept of escapist entertainment and how Americanism was expressed both in official documents and in contemporary public discourses. The chapter also analyses the Roman Catholic ideology through documents released by the Vatican and through the examination of public interventions made by leading ecclesiastic figures. This allows for a comparison with the American cultural ideology, and an examination of their proximity to each other.

Chapter 3 investigates the main directives taken by the Italian Government in relation to the American film industry in 1945–1960 and shows how the Christian Democrats' cultural policies reflected, to a certain extent, the interests of the American film industry and the Vatican cultural ideology. The decisive role of American production companies and their links with the Vatican in the development of Italian film industry is examined, in order to evaluate how the Italian production and distribution systems satisfied the American political and economic interests. Historians, who have dealt with post-war Italian cinema, have obviously come across and analysed Catholic film production and distribution in parish cinemas. However, in order to understand fully the entanglements between the Vatican on one side and the American and the Italian film industries on the other, I have undertaken a detailed study of the key individuals and institutions involved in making policies and regulations that affected the production and distribution of American and Italian films in the post-1945 era. This is particularly significant in relation to the Italian State legislature in order to assess the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in this process. An examination of Catholic production, distribution and exhibition is carried out in Chapter 4, where use of official primary sources from the Vatican, the archive of the

Catholic Exhibitors' Association, and several Catholic institutions as well as the most authoritative Catholic journals is made. An analysis of the role of the Catholic press towards American also helps to explore some of the implications of the relationship between the Catholics and American cinema. In Chapter 5 a study of the most successful American and Italian films shown in Italy in 1945–1960 identifies common themes, genres and characters¹, while a careful analysis of the response of the Vatican to the same movies allows a better understanding of the main themes recommended or excluded by the parish cinema circuit.

Chapter 6 deals specifically with the case studies of both American and Italian films. This chapter is by no means intended to provide geographical specificity by covering all popular films either produced or screened in post-war Italy. I have aimed at challenging the over-generalised account of post-war Italian cinema as being characterised as either Neorealism or other than Neorealism. Through its cultural and political influences, I have looked at the film industry's role in Italy in relationship to the Roman Catholic Church and I have identified films which have played a major role in defining this relationship. The films analysed in Chapter 6 have been selected according to precise criteria. They are films which are amongst the most successful in public cinemas across the country, according to the figures of the Exhibitors' Association. They are also the films which were considered by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico to be either suitable for general viewing to all audiences or barred to all. This criterion has allowed a new selection of films, which help shed new light on the study of Roman Catholic reception of American and Italian post-war movies.

In the final section, a number of key conclusions are outlined. Despite fundamental objections to the consumerist aspects of American culture, the Vatican support of the Americanization of post-war Italy can be seen as an attempt to restore morality through the use of a certain type of Hollywood cinema. This was encouraged by a coalition of interests built by the Christian Democrats which not only allowed a cross-fertilization between American and Italian cinema as the main vehicle for Vatican propaganda, but also promoted indigenous films in order to fulfil the aims of the Vatican.

The popularity of both these types of films is analysed in this book in terms of the Vatican response, looking at what was promoted and rejected by the official Catholic establishment, illustrating how the Vatican's principal concern was the preservation of pre-war gender stereotype and the re-establishment of female domestic roles.

1 You Can Be Like Us

American Intervention in Italian Reconstruction

THE AMERICAN MYTH IN ITALY: BIRTH, DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE

By the late nineteenth century it was commonplace for Italians to perceive America as a land of prosperity, opportunity and freedom: an American myth had become part of Italian life. It played a large role in the decision of numerous Italians to emigrate to America. This vision of America 'was kept alive through the letters of over four million immigrants who settled in America between 1880 and 1920' (Liehm 1984: 34)¹.

An image was conveyed of a country where everything was allowed, a place in which people could express themselves in ways that they could not in Italy. Sergio Pacifici, in his *Guide to Contemporary Italian Literature* (1962: 305), explains this image of America Italians had at the time:

No other country in the world was as instinctively loved as America: no other nation in the world had provided the Italian imagination with a myth whose validity was traceable to its suggestiveness. America and freedom were synonymous in the stark years before World War II and it was to the new continent that Italy looked not merely for understanding and help, but for hope.

Dominique Fernandez (1969) endorses Pacifici's analysis and traces the boundaries of the American myth in Italy. He expresses the view that the early success of the Fascists in taking control of the Italian State had the effect of prompting many Italian intellectuals to take up American literature and culture as an antidote to dictatorship. Fascism had the effect of deepening the absorption of American literature by a large proportion of the Italian intelligentsia in a way that was more intense than the experience of their counterparts in other European countries.

According to Fernandez, the dates of this absorption of the American myth through culture and literature are the years between 1930 and 1950. It is in the thirties that many Italian intellectuals started reading, translating and becoming fascinated by American authors. Cesare Pavese's essay "Un romanziere americano, Sinclair Lewis" (published in *La Cultura* in November 1930) signals the beginning of the myth, which ends with Pavese's death

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(1950). Fernandez chooses to ascribe the birth of the myth to the years 1930 to 1935, the period during which many of Pavese's articles were written; the original 1941–1942 publication of Elio Vittorini's anthology *Americana* marked the myth's climax; from 1947 the myth went into a decline that concluded with its demise as a cultural force in 1950. Guido Fink (1980: 62) argues that it ended earlier, citing Pavese again, who in 1947 asked: 'Is it us who are getting older, or it is that this little bit of freedom has been enough for us to distance ourselves from it?'. Luciana Castellina (1980: 46) chooses to argue that the myth endured until the Vietnam War, when many Italians came to perceive what they regarded as a conflict between the interests of American imperialism and those of the Third World.

However, the myth started to be shaken just after the post-war presence of the American military in Italy. Fernandez argues that this is due to American culture having lost its allure. No longer forbidden, as it had been under the Fascist regime, the paradox of the myth was becoming increasingly apparent, i.e. that Leftist intellectuals would not have supported capitalist America in any other circumstances than under Fascism (Fernandez 1969: 106). At the beginning of the Cold War, America came to be viewed in a new light; one that Luciana Castellina (1980: 43) terms 'an economic-financial power, with imperialist aims'.

The Americanists shared a common ground with regard to the myth. They all referred to America as a young and vibrant land that was full of contrasts: novelty and tradition, wilderness and industry, educated and uneducated people.

The importance of the cinema in the development of the American myth in Italy has been widely acknowledged. In the 1980 collection of essays *Il mito americano—Origine e crisi di un modello culturale*, by cinema historians Gian Piero Brunetta and Guido Fink, the experience of American cinema in Italy is regarded as having done more to consolidate the American myth than any other medium. The authors analyse some of the most popular genres and the American ideology that they attempt to transmit. The power of American cinema lay, at least at the beginning, in its ability—as Brunetta (1980: 21) states—'to maintain the optimism that many Italians felt was needed at the time. Even the anomalies were seen as diseased excesses, contained within a fundamentally healthy body'. Guido Fink (1980: 59) identifies the Italian intellectual crisis of confidence in the American myth as coinciding with the myth's success in spreading to the broader Italian populace: while the intelligentsia were starting to wake up from the American dream, the general population were becoming increasingly fascinated by it, especially through the medium of cinema. Images of the Dream Land were becoming familiar to everyone through the use of dubbing English into Italian, making the stranger into a friendly figure.

Brunetta's and Fink's essays raised the issue of the ideological role of American cinema, but mainly in relation to the cinematic techniques used during the 1940s and 1950s. According to them such techniques as reverse

angle sequences and long shot, extensively used from the 1940s, had an ideological meaning that could be analysed in contrast to those that were being used to make Italian movies.

The cultural, political and economic influence that the United States exerted on Italy and how this affected the development of Italian cinema was also acknowledged by historians in terms of the relationship between cinema and mass consumption. Analysing the role of American Government and of its cultural policy from the end of the Second World War, Sanguiliano (1983: 34) expresses the view very clearly affirming how wherever American cinema goes, more American products are sold.

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN ITALIAN RECONSTRUCTION, U.S.-STYLE CONSUMERISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

In September 1943, with the Allies landing in Salerno, the United States military commenced a direct martial-Governmental presence in Italy (Clark 1984: 303). At the end of 1945, the Allied Military Government transferred to the Italian Government control of those Northern provinces (the last to be left under the AMG's authority) while increasing the number of combat groups to six divisions of 9,000 men each². These years had a profound effect on Italy and Italians.

The Allies were often regarded as a force for liberation from the Germans. However, the distinction between liberation and occupation can be a subjective matter³. In *Rebuilding Europe*, David Ellwood defines the role taken by the United States Government in relation to European economies and to European national identities. After the Second World War, with memories of Fascism still very much alive, many European States, in an attempt to promote peace, included a formal recognition in their constitutions that national sovereignty should be limited. In Italy, national identity had been undermined by the experience of prolonged Fascist rule. The country looked to America not only as a source of economic support, but also as an economic model to be followed. During the Fascist era it had been commonplace for people with low incomes to regard America as a dreamland of opportunity, but the same people could not 'indulge any consumerist fantasies' (Duggan 1995: 12). After the war, and assisted by American economic intervention, Italians started to rebuild their economy and were able to see the prospect of consumerism on the horizon⁴. Ellwood stresses the importance of how economic reconstruction was at the heart of American foreign policy and how economic recovery was even more important than military aid. As Hamilton Fish Armstrong—editor of *Foreign Affairs*—stated in 1947:

First we must give; then we must invest; whenever possible we must buy; and eventually we may hope to begin getting our money back. (quoted in Ellwood 1992: 76)



Figure 1.1 Sicilians watch the first American jeeps go through their narrow streets (1943), courtesy Corbis.

It was important for the American economy to develop in Europe the ‘mass production for mass consumption’ that was already the basis of the American market (DeLong 1997: 2). However, large-scale low-cost production, which had worked in America, was taken up more slowly in Europe than had been anticipated. In June 1947 Americans launched the Economic Recovery Program—widely known as the Marshall Plan—which was not simply an economic manoeuvre but which also sought to establish financial stability as the foundation of ‘political independence’. The Program—strongly supported by the Vatican⁵—incorporated the desire to establish in Europe those American ideals that would promote democratic changes. The Plan was an expression of the American commitment to establish a strong presence within Western Europe. The reason for this was

understood by many, especially in Italy, as a desire to stop Communism.⁶ The massive Vatican-backed Christian Democratic propaganda campaign prior to the April 1948 Italian general elections, achieved its purpose of securing an electoral victory for the forces of conservatism. The Christian Democrat won 305 out of 574 seats in the *Camera dei Deputati*, the lower parliamentary chamber, and 131 out of 237 in the *Senate*.⁷ The Communist Italian Party was denied a central position on the national stage.

In Ellwood's view, the reason for America's strong presence in Italy was also a way 'to put forward a positive vision based on America's own experience: "A higher standard of living for the entire nation; [. . .] greater production", as a Marshall Plan propaganda booklet told Italians in 1949' (Ellwood 1992: 62). This point is of importance in accounting for the commonplace attitude amongst Italians towards 'this positive vision' and how the same vision shaped Italian identity. A better standard of living, together with a war against the totalitarianism that sought to threaten the American way of life, were the two objectives that were sought by American foreign policy in Europe. Ellwood feels prompted to write on the prospect of a possible Americanisation of Europe:

An economic United States of Europe would emerge, in which the American Dream could be dreamt without leaving home: 'You Too Can Be Like Us' that was the promise of the Marshall Plan'. Strictly linked with this promise of being 'like them', the American plan was also to produce 'a model of investment, production and consumption', where 'productivity was the key concept for getting results'. (Ellwood 1992: 88–94)

Productivity, prosperity and mass consumption were the fundamentals of the American economic model that the U.S. Government was seeking to export to Europe.

With the arrival of peace, from 1946 much of western and central Europe came to be characterised by a distinctive feature: Catholic political parties rose to dominance in Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Southern Germany, Italy, France, Austria and Hungary. In the case of Italy, the country faced a situation that was similar to that which had emerged after the First World War, when a single-party (then the Fascists, now the Christian Democrats) was at the head of the country. When ruling parties had to face the electorate, the process of Americanisation had the potential to be a political liability. When looking at Italy in this era, the difficult role of the Christian Democrats in their relationship with the Catholic electorate appears evident. While on one hand, the Church hierarchy was happy to support American opposition to Communism, on the other, it did not appreciate American consumerism, which was in part promoted through the imagery of Hollywood. While Duggan (1995: 21) shows how the Catholic Church understood the new mass media and how it could deliver its own message,

Ellwood sees a difficulty for the Christian Democratic Government. Welcoming the new mass media meant embracing certain aspects of American lifestyle, and allowing it to appeal to ordinary Italians. In his attempt to define Americanisation, Ellwood takes into account America's daunting presence on the political, economic and social levels. He admits that the European countries affected by this process of Americanisation were not entirely free to refuse it because America was able to draw attention to the Communist threat as a justification for its promotion of consumerism (Ellwood 1992: 236). In Italy, while the Christian Democratic Government seemed prepared to accept the process of Americanisation on a consumerist level, on a cultural level it had to find an alternative, if it was to maintain the support of the Catholic Church hierarchy. In 1952 Alcide De Gasperi, who served as the Prime Minister of Italy from July 1946 to July 1953, felt the need to State to a trade union audience that even if workers were becoming Americanised as consumers, they still maintained European characteristics, based on history and tradition (Zunino 1979: 364). So, the Christian Democratic Government accepted the American economic model but still sought to rebuild Italian national identity in a framework that was determined by European history and culture.

The issue of the post-1945 Americanisation of Italy has developed a secondary literature. David Forgacs (1993: 157–159) chooses to question the association of Americanisation and national identity, considering the importance of how Italy reinvented the American model, a topic of particular relevance in cinema. In his “L'americanizzazione del quotidiano. Televisione e consumismo nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta”, Stephen Gundle (1986: 561–594) uses television as an example for investigating how American culture was received and mediated by Italian society, concluding that the Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats were important in how the American model was transformed into an Italian one. My intention, with this book, is to examine the same process with regard to the cinema, investigating how Italian cinema made use of the American model to reinvent itself and how the Vatican responded to this process.

Giorgio Bocca's poignant question can be seen as the starting point: ‘Is it an Americanised Italy because of its vital force, or is it an Italy which is subjected to the way of life of its owners, without being able to defend itself?’ (quoted in Gundle 1986: 571).

ITALIAN CINEMA INDUSTRY IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The significance of cinema in post-war Italian society cannot be overestimated. The striking rise in the number of new cinemas opening in towns and villages from the end of the Second World War provided greater opportunities for cinema-going.⁸ The process of reconstruction needed to happen not only in terms of politics and material goods, but also in terms of

cultural activities. These increased with the liberation from Nazi occupation and reflected a new desire on the part of the general populace to start enjoying themselves. During the 1950s the country had the highest number of cinemas (11,641 compared to 5,806 of France and 6,885 of Germany) in Western Europe, making the medium the most popular form of entertainment for Italians (Anica 1961: 32).

Like everything else, the film industry needed to be rebuilt. The readmission to the Italian film market of movies made by the major American production companies slowed down the development of the Italian film industry, which initially was unable to compete with the high number of American films. The American studios were not keen on allowing a total reconstruction of a domestic film industry. In Italy, as in Europe, they needed to release all those films which had been forbidden during the 1930s (Brunetta 1991: 11). The restrictive practices adopted by the Americans, such as block-booking and blind bidding, that forced Italian distributors to accept their conditions without the possibility of competition from national production, made it more difficult for the domestic industry to flourish in the immediate period. At the war's end there was no export market that was primed to receive Italian films, while the domestic market was dominated by the 'dumping policy' of the Motion Picture Export Association of America.⁹

While Gundle (1995: 17) argues that for domestic distributors the dumping policy was a bargain, it must be said that it also represented a hurdle for domestic production, which desperately needed the support of the State. To this regard, Christopher Wagstaff (1998: 76) asserts that Italian directors responded to the American-made films by adopting a strategy of 'systematic exploitation' of the most popular genres. Musicals, comedies, adventures, dramas and historical films were the genres that managed to compete successfully with Hollywood productions.¹⁰ This line of argument suggests some of the key areas in which the ideology articulated in American films became transferred to the Italian cinema.

In his book *Cinema e pubblico* (1985), Vittorio Spinazzola gives a detailed description of the Italian film industry between 1945 and 1965, dividing the national production into films *about* the people and films *for* the people, referring in the first group to Neorealism and in the second to what can be defined as 'popular' cinema (musicals, literary adaptations, costume films, popular Neorealism and comedies).

The advent of Italian popular film can be characterized between 1948 and 1952 with the arrival of the *pink Neorealism*. Representatives of the *pink Neorealism* are the series *Pane, amore e . . .* (Scandal in Sorrento) (1955) and *Poveri ma belli* (Poor but Beautiful) (1956) together with many others which were extremely successful amongst audiences.¹¹ Spinazzola's observation on the relationship between *pink Neorealism* and Hollywood film is interesting:

Pink Neorealism represented the triumph of a particular type of happy ending Italian style: joyful but modestly moving. The Hollywood

example combined with the national tradition which, apart from the cinematic experiences before the war, traced its origin from bourgeois theatre right back to Goldoni. (1985: 117)

In 1954 television broadcasting in Italy began and its popularity started growing fast, with a weekly output of twenty-four hours in the first year and thirty-five hours in 1955 (Padovani 2007: 71). The new medium created challenges for the film industry. Of the various approaches that were taken for addressing the situation, co-productions came to prove a successful cross-fertilization between the two sectors, together with the first *super-colossi* made in Italy. *Ulisse* (Ulysses) (1954) and *War and Peace* (1956) were two approaches that film production companies adopted in order to try to persuade people to watch movies in cinemas. Major productions, co-productions and comedies were the main options that the industry used to address this crisis in Italian cinema going. This, in some ways, created a distinct transformation of the notion of quality in cinema. Art films gave Italian filmmakers a high international profile, but did not create much profit. The industry, for the sake of its own financial stability and well-being, needed to produce a popular genre cinema that might enable Italian films to regain the audience they had lost to foreign films and domestic television¹².

‘TRADE FOLLOWS THE FILM’: AMERICAN CINEMATIC PRESENCE IN ITALY AND BENEFITS OF THE AMERICAN LIFE SHOWN IN AMERICAN FILMS

Throughout the twentieth century, Europe was one of the principal markets for Hollywood films. This success meant that the popularity of American-made films represented a threat to the financial health, and even viability, of national film industries. Different countries used a range of legislative approaches to respond to this phenomenon. A frequently used approach was to exploit the popularity of Hollywood films to support domestic productions. It is an accepted view amongst critics that Europe opened its doors to American cinema with the First World War, when the slowing down of European film production created a drop in supply that was filled by the importation of American films (Quaglietti 1991: 7).

During the Second World War, American films were unavailable in some countries of mainland Europe. In summer 1945 Germany was the first European country to allow Hollywood films back in its cinemas followed by Italy, which had officially prohibited American films from 1938 until the end of the war (Fehrenbach 1995: 54). The ban against the showing of American films in Italy from 1938, which has been seen by critics as a way to protect the Italian film industry, was addressed only to the major American film production companies, while small independent producers continued to export their films to Italy (Brunetta 1994: 142).

Italy became the largest foreign market for the American film industry, replacing the United Kingdom by 1960, especially when the British Government started to impose heavy duties on American films. Both Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1998: 6) and Christopher Wagstaff (1995: 93) explain that, in the case of Italy, there was a clear plan regarding the national film industry. Admiral Ellery W. Stone, the Chairman of the Allied Italian Film Board, set up in 1945 by the Americans in order to 'determine the organisation of the Italian film industry', declared that as the Italian film industry was invented by the fascists, it had to be completely suppressed, together with all the instruments that 'incorporated this invention' (quoted in Wagstaff 1995: 93).

This attitude not only sought to hinder the re-emergence of an anti-democratic film industry but also put major obstacles in the way of the rebirth of any domestic production. Weakening the competition was certainly the best way to maximise profits, especially for an industry such as the American one, which was seeking to optimise the return on its investments in production.

At this point it is important to clarify how the Italian Government dealt with its film industry and with the pressure exerted by the American production companies. A common view has emerged in the English-language literature, articulated by scholars like Christopher Wagstaff, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David W. Ellwood, that the Italian State adopted a defensive attitude towards the American cinematic presence in the country¹³. By 1947 Italy had already incurred debts with foreign studio owners; Italian domestic production was very low and the American distributors charged extremely high rent to cinemas. At that point an active domestic Italian production industry was desirable to the Italian State on a number of grounds. Its product would provide an alternative to imported fare and so enable Italian cinema owners to secure a reduction in rental charges. It would meet the demand for indigenous product that large portions of the audience wanted and it would also reactivate a section of the economy.

Despite the opposition of the Film Board, the system of the *screen quota*, which had already been adopted in 1927, was abrogated in 1945 by Admiral Stone, and reintroduced in 1946 (Quaglietti 1991: 14). The number of Italian films to be shown varied throughout the post-war period. In 1949 it was twenty days a quarter¹⁴, while in 1956 it was raised to one hundred. Another way of dealing with the American presence in Italy, which Wagstaff (1995: 98) defines as a 'remedy against Hollywood', was the application of the *import quotas*, which the Americans obviously tried to stop.

The American cinematic presence in Italy also took on another form. When the help of the Government was not available, filmmakers found themselves at the mercy of private producers and entrepreneurs (Gundle 1995: 139). The opening in the 1950s of 'the film-making facilities to American studios and independent producers' and the collaboration between the American and Italian film industries is another aspect of the complex relationship that has been investigated by historians¹⁵. For American production

companies there were clear benefits to making films in Italy: low salaries, cheap studio rental, and tax benefits for investing abroad, especially when the export of hard currency from Europe was prohibited. By making films in Italy, American production companies could also invest their blocked money in films they could afterwards export back to the United States and out into other foreign markets¹⁶.

In his 1994 analysis of the American cinema in Italy, Gian Piero Brunetta (1994: 145) declares that 'for a long period after the war Italy continued to be the biggest importer of American films in Europe' and 'although the Government passed decrees placing limits on imports, in practice it never enforced them'. It is vital to establish whether and how the Italian Government did actually use the American film industry in relation to its own; an issue which will be looked at in Chapter 3, especially in the light of Reinhold Wagnleitner's strong claim that:

In Italy, the massive pressure of the Department of State not only prevented the introduction of import quotas and the economically necessary centralisation and nationalisation of the Italian industry. Hollywood also achieved tremendous advantages which allowed the U.S. Embassy in Rome to block any piece of film legislation even *before* it had been introduced to parliament. (1994: 202)

The link between Italian national legislation and the role of the Government with regard to the development of national film industry is firmly attached to the choice of films shown in the country. The movie director Luigi Comencini States his belief that the American films shown in Italy during the post-war period seemed to be chosen to emphasise optimism and democratic feelings (quoted in Gundle 1995: 65).

With the Americans, 7,500 reels of entertainment arrived in Italy. The effect of the proliferation of Hollywood films is explained by Duggan (1995: 13):

Hundreds of new cinemas sprang up to screen these, 120 in Rome alone in the period of occupation. Films continued after the war to be a key channel for the dissemination of the American myth in Italy, and between 1945 and the late 1950s the United States had a near-monopoly of distribution. By 1953 Italian cinemas were showing over 5,000 films purchased in America, including examples of almost every conceivable genre from musicals and comedies to western and war films. These films were not in any obvious sense propagandistic, but the cumulative effect of scenes showing luxurious interiors, glamorous clothes, large cars, expensive consumer goods and modern offices was bound to be considerable.

In a purely commercial way, this concept of 'Trade Follows the Film'—from the title of an article written in the New York *Saturday Evening Post* in

November 1925—seemed to have brought economic benefit to the American industry¹⁷. In his book *Movie-Made America*, Robert Sklar (1975: 217) remembers how trade of American products increased world-wide after Hollywood films would show the same products on the screen. In Brazil, for instance, a particular model of American car became very popular with an increase of sale of around 35% after it was publicized in a Hollywood film. This phenomenon seemed to increase during the years 1945–1954, when Hollywood seemed to support this new concept of ‘mass consumption’ in order to speed up the social transformation needed in Europe to achieve the ‘American way of life’.

Currently, there appears to be a scholarly consensus that there was a close relationship between Hollywood cinema and the promotion of propaganda that endorsed the American ‘way of life’. The main issue of selling American products by showing American films is of course strictly related to that concept of ‘freedom from want’ expressed by Franklin D. Roosevelt as one of the major purposes of America’s entry into the Second World War. Citing an article by Walter Wanger, the head of Walter Wanger Pictures Inc., David Ellwood (1994: 6) reports how for Wagner the ‘film industry represented a Marshall Plan of ideas’, where the same concept of free trade and freedom from want could have been expressed through ‘the movies’ power of penetration’ (Wanger quoted in Ellwood 1994: 6). In the process of helping the European film industry to recover, the possibility of developing a free market would allow Americans to export their films and to reimburse costs which the domestic market could not cover. This total dominance of the American film industry in Europe seemed to correspond very clearly with the intentions of the Marshall Plan. Not everybody, however, was in favour of this ‘Marshall Plan of ideas’ supported by Wanger. In his article “The Little State Department”, Paul Swann (1994: 179), while accepting the role of ‘ambassadors’ played by Hollywood production companies, argues against the possibility of a common interest between the American film industry and the United States State Department:

The strategies and tactical aims of the film industry in promoting and selling cultural commodities abroad, specifically in post-war Europe, were by no means synonymous with the policies and interests of the U.S. State Department.

With regard to the role of American cinema in Europe, Ian Jarvie (1994: 157) argues that there were two different uses of Hollywood films in two different historical times. In the pre-war period the films were used to promote the Americanisation of the world, while in the post-war period they represented a strong source of help in promoting United States as a ‘super-power’ able to fight against Communism. These two aspects of American film policy—Americanisation and the fight against Communism—are closely linked and represent two key factors in the relationship of Italy

and America in the post-war period. It becomes significant to define when and how the process of Americanisation started in Italy, how it was used in the fight against Communism, and how much impact the issue of mass consumption had on Italians. As Swann (1994: 186) claims, Hollywood's assertion was that 'movies were 'silent salesmen' for both ideology and American consumer products'. It is possible to build on Swann's viewpoint to assert that, especially in the case of Italy, Hollywood might embody a country which, despite being foreign and far away from a geographical point of view, represented an 'imaginative home'¹⁸.

This imaginative home was also reinforced when, after the war, the use of Italian language made Hollywood even more familiar to Italian people. The topic of language in post-war Italian cinema has been touched upon by historians from a number of different perspectives but as yet it is a subject that has not been treated in any depth. Wagstaff (1995: 96) refers to the matter of the diversity of the language with regard to the difficulty encountered by Italian distributors when trying to export Italian films to American and British markets. This difficulty is only just mentioned in the article—because of the focus being on the international market—and it is explained by the reluctance of British and American audiences towards subtitled and dubbed films.

In the collection of essays cited on Hollywood in Europe, the problem encountered by the American distributors is only briefly mentioned in the article on "The International Language Problem", where Maltby and Vasey (1994: 87) describe how 'by 1930 the major companies were producing foreign language versions' of films, so that the process of exporting to Europe could be carried out without having to make major changes during distribution and exhibition. This approach revealed itself to be very expensive and already by 1931 the best solution seemed to be subtitling and dubbing: Hollywood major production companies set up dubbing studios, to help American films in the Italian movie market. When this approach proved expensive, the big studios decided to transfer the dubbing process to Italy itself. Unfortunately, very little is known about what happened in this sector after the fall of the Fascist regime and the end of the Second World War.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ITALIAN CINEMA AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VATICAN AND THE AMERICAN FILM INDUSTRY

That the Italian State frequently intervened in the cultural aspect of the national film industry was an acknowledgment of cinema's importance in post-war Italy. Similarly, the Catholic Church promoted initiatives of various kinds that were intended to create a Catholic cinema for a Catholic country.

Scholars like Gundle, Wagstaff and Forgacs agree on how the Church recognised the significance of the cinema not just as a means of socialisation but

also as a medium for the expression of Catholic thought. Gundle expresses the view that the principal interest of the Church towards the cinema was to ensure that industry did not endanger the Church's authority in society and that in some ways the Church even managed to strengthen its own position (1990: 208). Wagstaff implies that the opening of about 5,000 parish cinemas was for the Vatican and the Christian Democrats a 'cultural and propaganda strategy' (1995: 114). Forgacs (1990: 121), when referring to the work of the Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti, at that time Undersecretary for Entertainment, States that 'he [Andreotti] appears to have been working precisely to make industrial and ideological criteria coincide'. Therefore, it can be reasonably supposed that there was a strong cohesion of interests between the Christian Democratic Government and the Catholic Church, both of which showed in the post-war period a significant interest in cinema and worked actively to support or defend a certain type of film industry. However it is still necessary to explore in greater depth how a Catholic ideology was identified in films, and how this may have shaped the Italian film industry at the time. In particular, this entails looking at the many Catholic nominees placed in charge of those Governmental institutions that had a significant role in the post-war film industry. This particular aspect will be looked at in Chapters 3 and 4.

The interest shown towards the cinema by the Vatican can be identified as part of an attempt to develop a Catholic cinema. The production company Orbis was set up in 1945 by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, while Universalial was financed directly by the Vatican¹⁹ and their role in post-war Italian film industry is discussed in Chapter 4.

Several films were produced and distributed by American majors. Quaglietti (1991: 71) recounts the relationship between American majors and the Vatican, indicating that the American production and distribution companies distributed Italian films to please the Vatican, since it was thanks to the Vatican that they could export the money earned in Italy to America. Quaglietti's points illustrate how the American film industry had a close relationship with the Vatican and how the Vatican at times would seek to impose its own conditions in order to disseminate a Catholic cinema. However, in the view of Bruno P. F. Wanrooij (1994: 251), 'the plans to create a Catholic film industry proved to be a failure'.

The Vatican had a different type of relationship with the Italian film industry than it had to the American one. The relationship between the Vatican and the American and Italian film production is a topic that still has considerable scope for investigation. So far, academics have dwelled upon different aspects of the subject without having given a detailed reconstruction of the relationship itself and film historians have failed in particular to account for the ways in which this relationship affected the development of the Italian film industry. However, they have clarified specific attitudes that the Church held towards the cinema, pointing out the contradiction between what was often a severe form of censorship and yet

what, at other times, could be an expression of a pure form of fascination. In the secondary literature, it has frequently been pointed out how often American films had the role of soothing Italians, presenting an optimistic view of life that was strongly needed in post-war Italy²⁰. Calming the spirits was, then, a desired effect, and American films had the right aesthetic and ideological ingredients to achieve this. Moreover, as Christopher Duggan (1995: 13) States, it was, in this way, easier for America to show expensive consumer goods through the cinema, 'less subject to the intrusion of either the Church or the law'.

As yet, the only piece that has attempted to reconstruct the relationship between Italian Catholics and Hollywood is the article mentioned above by Bruno P. F. Wanrooij. In it, he undertakes an analysis of Catholic responses to American cinema in order to reconsider issues such as the development of mass culture and what he terms the 'various expressions of anti-Americanism' (1994: 247). Wanrooij examines a number of the official documents that had been issued by the Vatican on issues such as the diffusion of cinema, morality in films and the role of Catholic organisations openly expressing their opinions on American films. By demonstrating that Catholic observers clearly preferred Hollywood productions to the output of Italian Neorealism, Wanrooij identifies a crucial point in the research of the relationship between the Vatican and the American film industry. However, when he explains the end of Neorealism as a consequence of the agreements between the Americans, the Italians, the Vatican and the Christian Democrats, he appears to have concentrated only on a 'radical change in the preferences of the public' and to have neglected a closer examination of Vatican and American ideology (1994: 254). Wanrooij's article is a good point of departure for an analysis of the relationship between the American film industry and the Vatican. However, there is still clear scope for the subject to be studied in greater depth.

2 Roman Catholicism, Americanism and Americanisation

Ideology, Politics and Cultural Propaganda

Ideology and American ideology have been widely explored throughout the last few decades. Several historians have looked at the relationship between low and high culture in the United States and many researchers have juxtaposed the ideas of young and old cultures in Europe and America. However, a close comparative analysis between American cultural ideology and the one expressed by the Vatican during the Cold War period so far has not been clearly made. This chapter will do so using American and the Vatican official primary sources (American Department of State Bulletins, presidential speeches and papers, Vatican encyclicals, Pope's speeches, and Catholic official documents).

The first part of this chapter will examine American political and cultural ideology of the post-1945 era, especially in terms of containment of Soviet power and the suffocation of the left in any country that expressed suggestion of political change towards that direction. The ideology of escapist entertainment will be examined, as will the significance of Americanism and how it was expressed both in official documents and in contemporary public discourses, and what ideas were related to it. The second section of this chapter will analyse the Catholic ideology both through official documents released by the Vatican and through the examination of public interventions that were made by leading ecclesiastic figures. A comparison between Catholic cultural propaganda and the American ideology will not just confirm their alliance in the containment of communism—which would not be a new issue—but principally has the aim to explore the presence of common themes in their 'cultural' propaganda.

Finally, the third section will deal with: American intervention on Italian cultural matters; the concept of Americanisation; and how American commercial media was used for circulating American ideology in Italy with the support of the Vatican.

AMERICAN IDEOLOGY AND ITS CULTURAL STRATEGY

When looking at the many and diverse definitions of the term ideology, one element seems to recur: 'the term ideology [. . .] would seem to make

reference not only to belief systems, but to questions of power' (Eagleton 1991: 5). Ideology, continues Eagleton, 'has to do with *legitimizing* the power of a dominant social group or class' (Eagleton 1991: 5). Order and power are important aspects of the concept of ideology. However, in order to understand how order and power are made legitimate in a society, one should turn to Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony, which Michèle Barrett explains as 'the organization of consent—the process through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion' (quoted in Žižek 1994: 238). In the view of Louis Althusser, this process is carried out by the State ideological apparatuses, such as media, culture and religion, in order to attract individuals to the ruling power¹. Althusser (1971: 169) emphasises the unconscious subjection of the individuals to a ruling 'Subject' by affirming that the subjected being 'is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission'. Here, it is crucial to acknowledge the role played by the concept of culture, which—if for Eagleton (1991: 28) confines itself to artistic and intellectual work of agreed value—still represents a fundamental aspect of legitimating the power of a ruling ideology. According to Gramsci, in fact, it was not just the economic force for which one class would rule over another; it would also depend on hegemony, in the sense of cultural and ideological forces². When discussing the concept of ideology and the dissemination of it, Gramsci (1975: 238–239) insists on the important role of the oral communication rather than the written one. The power of the oral communication, which the film was at the time the strongest representative, in order to legitimate the power of the ruling ideology is certainly essential when discussing American ideology. The concept of democracy is central to American ideology. Yet, in the context of this research, it is of relevance to analyse the ideals and the values behind the concept of 'democracy' in order to understand and identify the same values in American cinema. This becomes even more pertinent when it is borne in mind Francis Fukuyama's theory of the end of the ideology, in which he stated that 'there is only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potential universal validity: liberal democracy' (Fukuyama 1992: 42).

Reading documents from the Harry Truman administration, presidential papers, official speeches and the memoirs written by the President Truman himself, the image of American democracy presented to the Americans and to the world during the Cold War period was very clear. The strength of America's democracy was highlighted in many speeches: the most recurrent words and expressions were 'right to freedom of thought', 'wealth', 'abundance' and 'prosperity', 'opportunity' for everybody, 'freedom from coercion' and of course war against 'world communism', the 'malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue'³. There are also many ideas strictly linked to American democracy: loyalty and patriotism, hope and faith, courage, devotion to duty and concept of liberty, justice and rightness and friendly partnership to fight the 'tyranny of Communism', against

which it will be essential to 'develop a vigorous and effective ideological campaign'⁴. All these elements are relevant to identify the boundaries of American ideology, which even if accused by Howard Zinn of being surrounded with the 'rhetoric of democracy and liberty' (Zinn 1990: 22), still represents the main reference point to trace the concept of Americanism in the post-war period. In fact, in a speech delivered to an American Legion convention on 15 August 1951, President Truman affirmed that

Real Americanism means that we will protect freedom of speech [. . .], freedom of religion [. . .], fair opportunities for all our citizens [. . .], fair play [. . .], that liberty is not license and that Americanism is under attack by communism, at home and abroad⁵.

While in this context cinema was not directly included in Truman's concept of freedom of speech, the relationship between American ideology and American culture is vital. Frances Stonor Saunders' work on the cultural Cold War defines it in terms of United States Government control over the arts. In one part of her book, Saunders (1999: 21) explains how in the immediate post-war period the American authorities devised a massive theatre programme with a 'hit list of desirable moral lessons under categories such as "liberty and democracy", "power of faith", "equality of man", "pursuit of happiness"'. Therefore, it is not a coincidence to find the same expressions in the political Statements as in arts and culture guidelines of the time. The intersections between the Government and the world of arts are also suggested by Howard Zinn. In his work on American ideology he draws attention to a case in 1947 when an art exhibition was cancelled because it was considered 'un-American and radical' and accused of being 'distorted and ugly', as it did not glorify America, breeding 'dissatisfaction' (Zinn 1990: 261). This position was not applied only to theatre or painting. It also involved cinema, as during the Second World War, the Office of War Information worked in Hollywood to discourage films that 'offered negative portrayals of American life' (Wagnleitner and Tayler May 2000: 88).

This aspect of Government interference in the arts must be held in mind when comparing it with the influence of the American and Italian Governments in post-war Italian culture, and specifically Italian cinema. At this point, it is possible to observe how America legitimated its power through ideological apparatuses, such as culture. Following the Second World War the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) used culture as a form of political propaganda, investing in it millions of dollars and acting almost as 'America's Ministry of Culture', while 'the Department of State [. . .] scrutinized scripts with great diligence' (Saunders 1999: 129; Wagnleitner and Tayler May 2000: 87). The Congress for Cultural Freedom, for instance, whose aim was to push European left-wing intellectuals against Communism, was defined as the biggest cultural propaganda effort in directing Western



Figure 2.1 The American Motion Picture Industry meets with President Truman (1951), courtesy Corbis.

Europe intelligentsia towards the ‘American way’⁶. Culture, therefore, represented a significant element where the American political ideology could be expressed for two main purposes: fighting Communism in the world and creating a stronger relationship with Europe—especially in those countries, such as Italy and France, where mass movement Communist parties had the capacity to exert influence over sections of arts (Kramer 1999: 308). In his ‘Melvin Lasky Proposal’, the document which drew the lines of the cultural Cold War, Lasky affirmed that ‘the substance of the Cold War was cultural in range’ and that ‘behind the official representative of American democracy lies a great and progressive culture, with a richness of achievements in arts, in literature, in philosophy, in all the aspects of culture which unite the free traditions of Europe and America’ (quoted in Saunders 1999: 29, 30). Culture was an effective means of expressing American ideology. In 1949 Ellis Arnall, President of the Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers, felt able to tell the Motion Picture Industry Council that cinema was the ‘best ambassador for American democracy’⁷. Moreover, cinema would engage the audience subliminally without involving what Eagleton defines as a ‘reflective consciousness’ (Eagleton 1991: 37). In regard to this specific issue, Thomas Guback reiterates the role of cinema for spreading Americanism across the world and indirectly for circulating U.S. propaganda.

Motion picture companies did not continuously draw attention to the overt propaganda characteristics of their products because they preferred to avoid any insinuation that they were manipulating their content to meet

Government specifications. In a broad way, their co-operation with the State was on the level of erasing undesirable aspects from pictures, rather than intentionally incorporating elements that propaganda concerns would have demanded. The basic assumption was that commercial motion pictures already represented Americanism and no additional steps needed to be taken to enhance their content⁸.

American producers often denied the close relationship between American ideology and cinema. In an article published in the autumn of 1950 titled *Donald Duck and Diplomacy*, Walter Wanger, head of the production company Walter Wanger Pictures, Inc., strongly rejected this relationship between production companies and the American State, by which he said they were not 'subsidised'. He Stated that the production companies were 'a product of free enterprise', that relied only on their audience for their existence (Wanger 1950: 446). However he finished his article by writing that he believed Hollywood would be the natural capital of the Marshall plan for ideas:

Hollywood with its array of Statesmen and humanitarians like Walt Disney, John Ford, Ethel Barrymore, Bob Hope, Darryl Zanuck, Al Capp, Irving Berlin and Milton Caniff—Donald Duck as World Diplomat! (Wanger 1950: 452)

It was not a coincidence that during the Second World War Disney produced the propaganda cartoon *Three Caballeros* (1945), where Donald Duck was put at the service of a 'neighbour film' with the intention of maintaining strong ties with Latin and South American Governments. Cinema certainly represented with this film, as with many others, the best example of linking that culture of mass consumption with America and its ideology. In his *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, Berghahn (2001: 81) underlines, in this context, the importance of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835), in which the author 'connected democratic politics with forms of economic production and cultural consumption'. This culture is, therefore, the expression of a political and economic principle and engages 'significantly with genuine wants, needs and desires', becoming the expression of a successful ruling ideology (Eagleton 1991: 45). Mass culture becomes the manifestation of the egalitarianism which distinguished American culture from the European one and which Victoria De Grazia (1989: 54) defines as apparent classlessness of American commercial culture. As Lary May (1989: 127, 143) States, 'after 1947 the new "American" ideology of corporate consensus, class harmony, and abundance' was created and at the same time 'anticommunism rhetoric was now the common currency of Hollywood politics'. This made consumption and anticommunism two sides of the same coin, a coin that Hollywood was trying to spread worldwide in order to contribute to America's construction of a new world order. This 'ideological conversion'—as May termed it—was

achieved through the use of films that presented an ideal world as opposed to the evil embodied by the Communist countries. The ideology of escapist entertainment was widely supported by the Government. In 1951 Bertrand Russell (1951: 13) commented on the phenomenon:

The object is not to produce something that corresponds to fact, but something that makes you happy by corresponding to daydreams⁹.

The fundamentally optimistic outlook expressed by American films had been recognised in 1927 by the Flemish poet Marnix Gijzen when he collected his impressions of America in a travel book. However, in his view it was a form of forced apathy: 'Yet the American film exerts its influence on our thinking and behaviour: by systematically ignoring anything problematic it creates an atmosphere of intellectual indifference'¹⁰. It seemed, however, safer spreading optimistic ideas, that 'don't threaten established wealth or power' (Zinn 1990: 3) rather than risking with more dismal representation of reality. In 1948 the right-wing novelist Ayn Rand wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Screen for Americas* that sought to set out a film code. This was distributed amongst Hollywood filmmakers in order to spread the American way in contrast to the threat of Communism. In it, she made a number of significant suggestions in terms of plot and characters which needed to be used or ignored by Hollywood filmmakers and producers in order to help in disseminating the American way and at the same time resisting the Red propaganda. In order to do so, Rand suggested to filmmakers not to smear the main principles of Americanism like free enterprise system, industrialism, wealth, profit, success, while they should not to glorify what Rand believed to be the main aspects of Communism, such as failure, depravity, the 'common man' and the collective. Stories that had only sordid characters (murderers, perverts, etc.) and sordid plot, which glorify depravity, only 'represent a profoundly insidious attack on all the moral principles and all religious precepts' and current events must not be dealt with carelessly, because they can arouse 'antagonism and resentment' (Rand 1948: 6, 10). By doing so, according to Rand (1948: 1), one allows Communists

To corrupt our moral premises by corrupting non-political movies—by introducing small casual bits of propaganda into innocent stories—thus making people absorb the basic premises of Collectivism by indirection and implication.

The author concluded by suggesting that American films should not discredit American political institutions, such as the Congress of the United States, the courts or election, because it would create the condition for criticising a system, which is 'the best ever devised in history' and which represents the political principles of Americanism, which every producer has the moral obligation to present in the best possible way (Rand 1948:

11). Cinema seemed to have precise guidelines on how to portray America and celebrate its social and political identity. In her pamphlet, in fact, she suggested that certain issues (such as American political institutions)—which the Communists were trying to ‘sneak into pictures intended as non-political’—needed to be left out of scripts. However, she added that ‘there is, of course, no reason why you should not make pictures on political themes’, as long as these would advocate ‘the political principles of Americanism, seriously, consistently and dramatically’ (Rand 1948: 11).

In his book *America's World Identity: The Politics of Exclusion*, Neil Renwick (2000: 58) defines those principles of Americanism very clearly: ‘American heroism, honesty, selflessness, neighbourliness, democratic freedom, individual and community goodness and virtue’. Renwick also affirms that Americanism, American values and ideology were celebrated through propaganda and war films, as well as Westerns. The next two parts of this chapter will investigate whether and how the representation of Americanism in Hollywood films would relate to the Vatican's ideology in relation to culture.

THE VATICAN'S CULTURAL IDEOLOGY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICA

The role of the Catholic Church in the immediate post-war period was visible in several aspects of Italian society. The development of a Catholic political party, the intention of the Azione Cattolica Italiana association to start up a new Catholic newspaper to divulge the Christian thought across society, and the attention the Vatican addressed to the culture are just examples of a dominant presence which spread outside churches and parishes. On the political front, after the strong affirmation of the Christian Democrats, their leader Alcide De Gasperi worked on the development of the relationship between Catholicism, freedom and democracy. De Gasperi's political and spiritual doctrine could not forget the fight against Communism, in the attempt to build a new democracy in Italy. Politics, economy and culture were in different ways under the sphere of influence of the Catholic Church and Pius XII's plan of ‘Christian re-conquest’ of Italy spread in all different areas of society, from politics to the economy, from the law to the family, from work to fashion and clothes, as well as in numerous other more properly religious aspects of life. During the Pontificate of Pius XII the guidance of the Pope became increasingly important, with radio, cinema, newsreels and the press establishing a sort of direct relationship between the Pope and the faithful¹¹.

This special relationship between the Church and its community was created also through the means of culture, which played a substantial role in the attempt to operate that ‘Christian re-conquest’ desired by Pius XII. The popularity of various Catholic institutions and their relationship with the party was extremely significant, especially in the intention from the Vatican

to spread the Catholic culture across those cultural apparatuses controlled by the State (schools, radio and television, in particular) (Allum 1990).

The complex relationship between the Vatican and the State, in terms of culture and specifically in relation to the cinema, will be dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4. Here it is important to bear in mind how the widespread and mass penetration of Catholic culture in the post-war period was 'hegemonic by the time of the Liberation, not only within the organised Catholic movement, but also nationally' (Nesti quoted in Baranski and Lumley 1990: 81).

When referring to the attitude of the Roman Church in relation to the cinema, it is noteworthy to observe how the Church's interest towards cinema increased from the 1930s to the end of the 1950s. This is clearly confirmed by the documents issued by the Vatican in preparation to the main speeches on cinema made by the Popes during those years: while the documents issued by the Vatican before the encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* (1936) were only ten, those issued before Pius XII's speeches on the *Film ideale* (1955) were forty-four and those before the encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) numbered fifty-four (Baragli 1958: 9).

In order to try understand the Vatican's position with regard to the film industry, it is useful to undertake a brief analysis of the major documents issued by the Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, who provided a significant and complete doctrine on the cinema. *Vigilanti cura*, issued in 1936 and defined by Marco Bongioanni (1962: 12) as the Vatican's 'phase of defensive tolerance', was the first official encyclical on the topic of cinema. Despite being issued ten years before the period here analysed, this encyclical is of major relevance. First of all, it is the first open declaration of the importance and power of cinema, which was to be reaffirmed in subsequent documents. Moreover, it established in a very pragmatic way the attempt to promote Catholic influence over the film industry (*Vigilanti cura* 1936: 6), which was to be renewed by Pius XII in his encyclical *Miranda prorsus* (*Miranda prorsus* 1957: 25–30). The 1936 encyclical also declared unequivocally the role that the Catholic press was expected to pursue in order to address Catholics towards the 'right films' to watch (*Vigilanti cura* 1936: 7).

The encyclical starts, however, by praising work done in America by the Legion of Decency. This organisation had been set up in 1934 by a Council of Catholic American Bishops with the task of rating films and identifying and condemning those that it regarded as being immoral. The Legion published rating lists that were intended to provide 'a moral estimate of current entertainment feature motion pictures'. Films were rated as either unobjectionable (Class A), objectionable (Class B), or condemned (Class C). The "C" was applied to movies that the organisation condemned as 'indecent and immoral and unfit for public entertainment'. The encyclical *Vigilanti cura* referred to this morality of film, stating the importance of making the cinema 'moral, moralizing, educating', and complimenting the Legion for the success that it had achieved:

It is an exceedingly great comfort to us to note the outstanding success of the crusade that has led cinema, under your vigilance and under the pressure of public opinion, showing an improvement in moral matters. Crimes and vice are portrayed less frequently, sin is no longer so openly approved and acclaimed; false ideals of life so inflammatory for the young, are no longer presented in such flagrant manner. (*Vigilanti cura* 1936: 4)

The American example was cited again when the Pope asked his congregation to promise—as they did in United States—not to see films which offended Christian truth and morality (*Vigilanti cura* 1936: 4, 5).

This example—according to Giulio Andreotti, Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in the immediate post-war period (whose activity will be analysed in Chapter 3)—produced excellent results:

The path by which American Catholics [. . .] have obtained effective improvements in the American output has been through the widespread custom of not visiting cinemas when they show objectionable films. (Andreotti, RC 1952: 4)

Boycotting a film considered to be immoral represented the strength Catholic audiences could exert in order to force the failure of a film condemned by the Vatican. This was often requested by bishops and Catholic representatives in post-war Italy, embodying a form of censorship which came from within the Catholic establishment and affected objectionable films.

The importance and power of cinema had been already stressed by the Pope in two significant documents: a speech made to the members of the Motion Picture Executive Committee of Hollywood, who had completed a tour of Europe with a symbolic visit to the Vatican in July 1945, and a speech addressed to the representatives of the American major production companies a month later¹². In both addresses, Pius XII had enhanced the social responsibility of the American film industry in both the United States and the world as whole, and stressed how cinema, if improperly used, could ‘propagate the evil spirit of distrust, enmity and hate’¹³. The danger of cinema was again addressed in his following encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (8 September 1957: 6), in which he explained how the extraordinary power cinema had on people can ‘drag [man] into the darkness, lead him into temptation, put him at the mercy of uncontrolled instinct’. The position of the Vatican, in relation to the dangers of the cinema, which in his *Cinema educativo e no* (1953) Carmelo Cottone had questioned widely, did not change much in the following half century. On 9 November 2002 Pope John Paul II made a speech in which he defined media in general as ‘extremely powerful instruments, which, if misused, can produce devastating effects on the conscience and consciousness of the people and in society’¹⁴.

The two speeches on *Il Film ideale*, that Pope Pius XII made to representatives of the cinema world, offered a much more sophisticated analysis of the film industry and the role of cinema in modern society. The importance of the medium is again stressed in a very compelling way: the pontiff reminds his audience of the role cinema had in Italy—the country then being the third place in terms of number of spectators after America and Great Britain (*Il film ideale* 1955: 5)—and then moves on to a very refined analysis of the cinematic medium (*Il film ideale* 1955: 6–10).

In the core of *Il film ideale*, and in relation to the dangerous misuse of the cinematic tool, one passage is fundamental when the comparison with the American ideology and its expression in cinema is made. This passage deals with what the Pope defines the ideal film in relation to the spectator and the importance of the respect to be shown towards the human being.

We only term ‘ideal’ those films [. . .] which reinforce and elevate man’s consciousness of his dignity; which help him to better know and love the high level which was placed in his nature by his Creator; which speak to him of the possibility of increasing his gifts of energy and virtue; which cement in him the persuasion: that he can overcome



Figure 2.2 Pope Pius XII with representatives of the European Film Commissions (1953), courtesy Corbis.

obstacles and avoid mistaken resolutions; that he can always get back on his feet after a fall and return to the right path; that, finally, he can progress from good to better through the use of his freedom and faculties. (*Il film ideale* 1955: 11–12).

This moral obligation of cinema, where only good should be portrayed and evil shown only if it is finally defeated, presented clearly many similarities with what over twenty years earlier the Hays Code had sought to set out as standards for America film production. William Hays was the President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) from 1922 to 1945. In order to oppose the threat of censorship coming from outside, Hays—together with a group of Hollywood representatives—instituted in 1930 the Production Code written by the Jesuit priest Daniel Lord, which was a set of guidelines producers had to bear in mind when commissioning a film (Maltby 1995: 62; Black 1994: 6). When reading the text of the Production Code, it is clear that the main issues raised are related primarily to crime and sex. Sex issues are worth mentioning here as in many ways they remind us of what will be later on in a more open way raised by Pius XII in his *Il film ideale* (and very much what will be condemned in the films chosen for the case studies in Chapter 6). The Code Stated that ‘the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld’ and issues such as adultery, seduction or extreme scenes of passion should not be explicitly treated (The Motion Picture Production Code 1930). Amongst the other areas covered, it is here important to note obscenity, vulgarity and dance, which will be aspects strongly condemned by the Vatican and which will be discussed in relation to the films’ analysis in Chapter 6 (see also Gundle 2007: 127). This self-regulatory code of ethics ‘contributed significantly to Hollywood avoidance of contentious subject matter, and was a controlling force on the movies’ construction of narrative and character’ (Maltby 1995: 60–61). By seeking to establish the moral importance of entertainment, it recognised the responsibility of the cinema industry to produce films that would influence the public in a positive way.

In 1945 Eitel Monaco, director of Anica, the Italian producers association, was to propose a self-regulatory set of rules that were based on the Hay Code, afterwards replaced by the Government regulations (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1529). However, as it will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the U.S. system, in which studios agreed to be controlled by an external body, could—as Román Gubern (1981: 11) affirms—only be carried out in countries with concentrated film industries, which Italy did certainly not have. This is perhaps the reason why, when looking at the national film production accepted and praised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, the figures were very low, demonstrating a lack of correspondence between Catholic and industrial needs.

In the Hays Code a range of taboo topics were presented (such as illegal drug traffic, sex perversion, miscegenation), while positive attitudes

towards marriage, family, home, Governments and religion were encouraged. In a very significant passage of *Il film ideale*, Pius XII dealt with the same topics, underlining the importance of the relationship between the ideal film and the family, the State and the Church, as main aspects of the community. Pius XII outlined what the role of cinema should be in relation to the family values that the ideal film should portray: a strong man, who knows the importance of his role as husband and father, a mother who is satisfied in her role in the home, and children who are respectful, generous and happy (*Il film ideale* 1955: 28–29). It is significant to notice the language used in the passage, where the man was associated with expressions such as virile, firmly, loyalty, conjugal love, and women to wife, mother, irreproachable conduct, dedicated to the home and intimacy (*Il film ideale* 1955: 28–29). When looking at the films analysed in Chapter 6, these values or the absence of them will come out very clearly: dedicated mothers are the main characters of films such as Julien Duvivier's *Don Camillo* (1952), and *Il ritorno di Don Camillo* (The Return of Don Camillo) (1953), while potentially dedicated wives are the main female characters in George Cukor's *Holiday* (1938) and John Huston's *The African Queen* (1951). On the other hand, Leonard's *La donna più bella del mondo* (The World's Most Beautiful Woman) (1956), De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli* (The Gold of Naples) (1954) and *Stazione Termini* (Indiscretion) (1953), Mattoli's *Un turco napoletano* (1953) and Rossen's *Mambo* (1955) as well as Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959), Sidney's *Pal Joey* (1957) and Hawks' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) all present female protagonists with very different values, an obvious disinterest for domestication and raising children, and a clear desire for freedom and emancipation.

The importance of how the family values should be portrayed on the screen was re-emphasised by a document, written by the Italian Episcopal Conference, that was concerned with the evil aspects of cinema, and which was published during March and April 1961 in the official Vatican daily *L'Osservatore romano* and its official journal *La civiltà cattolica*. The document accused many films of desecrating family values, respect for women and any forms of authority¹⁵. Two years later, the first *Guida cinematografica* issued by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico raised again the educative responsibility of cinema in relation to family values:

Now nobody can deny that cinema has often contributed to the diffusion of models of living which are insidious to the cohesion of the family, which are irredeemable to loyalty, which are hymns to pleasure and to success gained without scruples. (*Guida cinematografica* 1963: X)

According to *Il film ideale*, a strong family was to seek its support from the State, whose authority must be preserved and enhanced through the cinema, which 'can fulfil its role to the advantage of the community, reinforce the sense of loyalty to the State and promote progress' (*Il film ideale*

1955: 31). This was clearly in line with what was Stated in the Production Code, where 'the history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly' (The Motion Picture Production Code 1930). A comparison of the Hays Code with Pope Pius XII's two encyclicals on cinema reveals a strong parallelism with regard to an urge to promote an ideal film that promoted truth, goodness and beauty, and refused to give a positive representation of wrongdoing, evil or sin¹⁶. This is but one example of a very precise doctrine presented by a Pope, who had strong feelings about the issue of cinema, pronouncing upon it personally at least seventeen times in official speeches and documents (Baragli 1960: 25). With regard to the morality of the cinema, it is productive to mention Msgr. Luigi Civardi's book *Il cinema di fronte alla morale* (1940), which was defined at the time as a moral code for the cinema and which issued precise guidelines on how to apply Catholic morality to the film industry. The volume was written with the intention of explaining what the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico intended to do when compiling the guidelines that could help to assess the application of the Catholic morality in the cinema industry. The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico was created in April 1935 with the intention of: classifying films and distributing the classification throughout all Catholic institutions in Italy; publishing *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, official publication of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, with articles, reviews and comments on films; organising Catholic cinema clubs throughout Italy; setting up courses of history of cinema for priests; producing films and documentaries¹⁷.

Civardi's text was addressed to exhibitors, censors, film critics and anyone else who might be involved in the delicate exercise of seeking to balance morality and cinema. Civardi explains how the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico was the office in charge of controlling the films produced, classifying them according the Catholic morality and informing the Catholic community of the classification itself (Civardi 1940: 17). It was a form of private censorship, which however created a strong reaction from the film industry: very soon, producers approached the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in order to gain an ecclesiastic consensus for their films, hoping therefore to pass automatically the State censorship, closely linked to the Vatican (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1536).

In his attempt to define morality, art and their relationship, Civardi gives a significant explanation of immorality: it was immoral anything which would threaten religious and civic authority, which would encourage rebellion and anarchy or which would discredit religion and the country. This again resembles what in America was Stated by the Hays Code: in the Production Code national and religion feelings were entitled to 'consideration and respectful treatment' and issues such as crimes against the law could not be justified (Black 1994: 306, 308). In his *La Chiesa e il cinema*, Salvatore Canals (1961: 95) reiterates this concept of immorality closely linked to the dangerous power cinema could exercise over people,

while also looking closely at important concepts such as family, State and religion, and at how films should deal with them in order to influence people in a positive manner (Canals 1961: 121–141).

In order to ascertain the ideological presence of the Vatican in the film industry, it is appropriate to examine the role of ecclesiastic censorship that was performed by official Catholic organisations. Alongside the State intervention in applying a form of censorship, the Vatican played an important role in advising the Catholic community on which films to watch and which films to avoid. The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had, amongst its duties, the control over which films were shown in church cinemas. Through its weekly publication of the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico sought to pronounce moral judgements on films that were coming out and to advise on those that were suitable to be screened or that could be if the appropriate cuts were made. In 1948, in order to make this procedure more official, Pius XII set up a special Commission that was charged with assessing films with regard to their morality. As the Statute of the Papal Commission for Didactic and Religious Cinematography Stated:

The Papal Commission for Didactic and Religious Cinematography exists to study cinematic works destined to further knowledge of Christian doctrine and of the teachings of the Catholic Church, which will be spontaneously subjected to revision by the Holy See. Judgement will also be extended to technical and artistic aspects insofar as these influence the religious and didactic value of the cinematographic work¹⁸.

Therefore, there was an attempt to control the film industry not just on the moral aspects, but also on the technical and artistic ones, as they represented important parts of the films analysed. The role of the Commission, which needed to work in collaboration with the national Catholic Cinema Board, was broad. In a letter to Don Jean Bernard, the President of the Office Catholique International du Cinématographe (OCIC), Giovan Battista Montini, from the Secretary of State, explains the role of the Catholic moral judgement over cinema: it had to exert an influence over Catholic audiences, persuading them to attend recommended films for their ‘moral and artistic merits’, and as much as possible discouraging them from viewing condemned films (Lettera 9 luglio 1949, quoted in Baragli 1958: 106).

The classifications adopted by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico were posted on the church doors in Italy so that the official Vatican position relation to every film released was universally known. Gian Piero Brunetta (1975: 63) defines the *Segnalazioni* as ‘the normal guidance service for Catholics’, as a means of imprinting the official position of the Vatican over the population. The *Segnalazioni* had commercial value for the exhibitors of church cinemas but not for the Catholic community (Bongioanni 1962: 25). However, people had to be kept informed and follow the Centro

Cattolico Cinematografico classifications¹⁹. This procedure was strongly articulated also in 1961 in a speech made by Cardinal Giuseppe Siri (RC 1961: 154), who eagerly urged the community to ignore those films, which were not seen by the Church in a positive way. Again the Legion of Decency was praised:

When the famous Legion of Decency was established by the Bishop of Indianapolis in America, the underlying commitment not only by Catholics, but also by Protestants and by Jews, was this: I will not go to see a film which has been ruled out by the relevant authorities, and I will never set foot in a cinema where one of these films is shown. And with that the opposition in America crumbled. The Legion of Decency was victorious. This was self-control.

The success cheered by the Cardinal is not exactly borne out by Gregory D. Black's research on censorship in Hollywood. He found that the Legion, rather than keeping people away from cinemas, had actually encouraged attendance (Black 1994). However, in Italy things seemed to be different: as Cesari Stated, a negative comment from the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico could make a real difference on producers' and distributors' incomes, as they would be excluded from the parish cinema circuit (Cesari 1982: 89). Moreover, as during this post-war era the number of church cinemas increased rapidly, from about 2,500 in 1948 to around 7,000 in 1953, the level of 'impact on box-office takings for certain films reached as high as 25%' (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1536).

During its first six years of operation, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico examined 1,560 films (Gori 1980: 12). The morality of films was the discriminating value of the positive or negative judgement on the films and the values which were immediately accepted were those of patriotism, of nationalistic exaltation, of sacrifice, of conventional and catechistic religious celebration (Brunetta 1977: 254–270).

These echo what the Legion of Decency had sought to impose over Catholic America, and what Ayn Rand had urged Hollywood producers and directors to do in her precise guidelines: without referring specifically to religion, Rand (1948: 12) had invited American production companies to present the values of Americanism 'strongly and honestly' in order to spread an image where sacrifice, justice and fairness were at the basis of the American nation.

In 1950 *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico official cinema magazine which will be looked at in Chapter 4, published an article by "G.P.", on the role of Catholic censorship in America. The article Stated that American films had to be approved by what was termed a seal, which if not put on a film, could cause the anger of the Catholic organisations. This illustrates the influence that could be exerted by Catholic institutions in the United States. *La Rivista del Cinematografo*

suggested that such a model should be introduced in Italy ("G.P.", RC 1950: 20). In a letter to Don Albino Galletto, Ecclesiastical Consultant of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, Giulio Andreotti, Undersecretary to the President of the Council of Ministers responsible for the State intervention in the film industry, expressed the need to develop a Christian cinematographic conscience (Andreotti, RC 1952: 4). This illustrates the latter's vision of how State and Church should work together in order to improve the moral content of cinema production. This aspiration needed to be balanced by an attempt to respect the escapism of the medium. In an attack against Neorealism published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (Lalli 1947: 6), Michele Lalli affirmed how cinema must be elevating of the mind but also remain escapist, which Italian and French Neorealism had failed to do and which, of course, was at the time the slogan of the Hollywood industry: already in 1925, a Paramount advertisement encouraged audience to escape in the two hours of a film screening and 'this product, the experience of escape packed into a two-hour story [. . .] has constantly provided the basis of Hollywood's appeal to its audiences' (Maltby 1995: 36–37). Numerically, French films were the most forbidden by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (Cesari 1982: 91). American films, often criticised for their portrayal of a luxurious lifestyle, or for their persistent representation of divorce as an accepted family value, were not in terms of numbers excluded from the church cinemas circuit (Civardi 1940: 50; Andreotti 1952: 3). The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico found the majority of American films to be acceptable. An examination of these, and their expression of American ideology will be made in Chapter 6.

THE AMERICANISATION OF ITALY AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE VATICAN: CULTURAL FREEDOM OR CATHOLIC COLONIALISM?

When analysing the spreading of American culture abroad, it is worth bearing in mind the distinction made since the nineteenth century between high culture, which Europeans regarded themselves as the representatives of, and low culture, which was identified by the Europeans with America and as being 'vulgar and primitive' and to be 'avoided by a self-respecting bourgeois' (Berghahn 2001: 87). This division was interrupted in the twentieth century, when the development of mass production produced a new form of mass culture. Cinema was a prominent expression of this new phenomenon, as tickets were accessible to everybody 'and "bourgeois" dress codes could be ignored' (Berghahn 2001: 87). Moreover, it was the medium that allowed best the spread of 'American-ness': as Neil Renwick States, 'the healthy heterosexual male', 'machismo' and 'patriotic bravery' were all epitomized in classical Hollywood films and all 'reinforced the values of America's hegemonic cultural discourse: the symbiosis of individual and

community, ethical righteousness and selflessness' (Renwick 2000: 38–39). These issues are not dissimilar from what Pius XII had expressed in *Il film ideale*, especially when looking at the choice of language. Nationalism, sense of community and morality were not only the manifestations of a certain strand of Americanism but also the celebration of the image of a country that was to be exported abroad.

Elite Europeans had to accept how quickly American culture became widely popular in their own countries, transforming the idea of culture itself and—according to many—'Americanising' Europe. A wide literature about the spread of mass culture in America and abroad has developed, from Roland Barthes' relationship with ideology to C. W. E. Bigsby's analysis of the issue of 'cultural uniformity' up to the implication of national identity and cultural imperialism. For many academics, such as Macdonald, mass culture, which in its modern form has become closely identified with America, has often been taken to represent 'a cancerous growth on High Culture' (quoted in Berghahn 2001: 101) and a threat to Europe: in his book on American and Europe cultural relations, Richard Pells (1997: 7, 189, 205) States that the term 'Americanisation'—a word first recorded in Britain during the 1830—has, since the beginning of the twentieth century, often been associated not only with its pervasiveness but also with a 'sense of danger' to Europe.

Pommerin's (1995: 96) definition of Americanisation as a 'framework' for the study of Western European history is especially relevant when examining the Cold War period. It was an era during which United States foreign policy and American culture were entwined. As McKay (1997: 26) wrote, 'Americanization through culture can be seen as part of the Cold War project'. Washington sought to promote American values internationally. Examples of this effort include: the establishment in 1946 of the Fullbright programme as 'a sort of cultural Marshall Plan for the intellectual reconstruction of the West' (Pells 1993: 74); the formation in 1950 of the Congress for Cultural Freedom—'an enterprise secretly subsidised by the CIA, designed to check the symptoms of anti-Americanism among and the possible "neutrality" of Europeans in the Cold War' (Pells 1993: 74) but also 'a campaign of peer pressure to persuade intellectuals to dissociate themselves from Communist fronts' (Stonor Saunders 1999: 98); and the creation in 1953 of the United States Information Agency, which was given responsibility of Government for propaganda.

The interest that the United States Government had in spreading American culture abroad was not confined to conveying the 'message of Americanism and Democracy to the rest of the world'²⁰. While from the 1940s, the State Department had started to consider Hollywood as their best 'ideological ally', which could help 'in promoting democratic ideals' by 'exporting movies that reflected favourably on the United States', American culture also provided an effective means of promoting the American way of life, with its accompanying American-made products, in Europe²¹. This is borne

out by the way in which, when the Marshall Plan was set up, the Truman administration put together not only a package of economic aid, but also an 'unlimited supply of American movies' (Pells 1997: 217). As Europeans identified American technology with modernity and glamour, the possession of a car or a refrigerator became synonymous with wealth and social status, which became very significant in the attempt to purchase—together with material items—also the American lifestyle (Whitfield 1991: 69; Ellwood 2001: 44). It was in this context that Victoria de Grazia (1998: 26) analyses the role of American cinema in Europe:

The Hollywood mission now became something more than promoting a material way of life. [. . .] The hallmark of the free world won by Allied arms was the free movement of goods, cultural and otherwise. Whatever the commodity's nature—and there was no fine distinction between Coca-Cola, expressionist art exhibits and *Readers' Digest*—movement of goods not only facilitated communications among people, but indeed fostered a real form of cultural progress by exposing stagnant localism to the fresh main current of contemporary mass culture. Henceforth, the US industry regarded it as legitimate on cultural as well as economic grounds to master its vast power (which included US Government agencies) to challenge States which denied access to their markets.

Central to de Grazia's idea of 'movement of goods' is the role played by contemporary mass culture, which was closely linked to the economic benefit the movement itself could produce. The essence of de Grazia's Statement is the identification under the same category of 'products' as diverse as Coca-Cola, art or even cinema, which reintroduced the question of cultural progress in relation to economic progress. The idea was that material prosperity, which was portrayed in American films, would become part of the European culture by coexisting with the local one and thus become 'everyone's second culture' (de Grazia 1998: 16). If, as David Forgacs (1996: 273) contends, cultural consumption can be used in a broad sense defining the assimilation process of a product and of the lifestyle represented by it, such can be applied by the cinema, where by watching American films, Italians would 'appropriate' the symbols and images linked to the American lifestyle.

However, as McKay (1997: 40) points out, 'America exported does not equal America', implying how different the reality was from the idea of America created in the minds of many Europeans. When analysing the relationship between American culture and Europe, Richard Pells' (1993) essay on U.S. culture in Europe tries to underline how this should be seen not as a process of cultural imperialism but rather as a sort of 'cross-fertilisation', in which 'a one-sided imposition on Europe of American values and life-styles' did not effectively occur (Pells 1993: 67). However, Robert Kroes (1993: 303) argues that 'any degree of Americanization implied an equal degree of de-Europeanization'. Pells' theory is extended by Victor

Roudometof and Roland Robertson (1998: 187), who use the term 'glocalization,' defining it as:

The simultaneous adaptation of cultural items in different locales via the appropriation and production of local practices and traditions.

When specifically looking at the relationship between American and Italian cultures and at their 'cross-fertilisation' process, it is to be noted how, especially in the area of cinema, some distinctive aspects of American film production transferred to Italy adapting themselves to 'those local practices and traditions' that Roudometof and Robertson refer to. David Forgacs (1993: 165) deals with it in terms of a clear distinction between Americanisation and 'Italian modernization process': 'between American models in themselves and the reinvention and reworking of those models in Italy'. The identification of the modernization process with 'the consumption of American cultural items' reveals a different aspect when the manner in which local cultures adapted themselves to modernity is examined (Roudometof and Robertson 1998: 189; see also Hay 1987). In her essay "Invasion and Counterattack", Giuliana Muscio addresses the issue of what Portelli (1993: 131) defines as the 'Italian counterculture', when she States that Italian cinema 'stole' the secrets of different aspects of American film production and promotion, citing the example of 'star portraits and publicity stunts' (Muscio 2000: 126). This 'adapting to modernization and cultural changes' can be investigated further by the application of Roudometof and Robertson's glocalization theory to the relationship between American cinema and Italian cinema.

The political and economic relationship between the United States and Italy in the immediate post-war period should be borne in mind when seeking to comprehend the role of American culture and the Italian response to it. Until 1949 unemployment, inflation, shortage of food and poverty were the first issues to be tackled by European Governments, in order to try to achieve the Rooseveltian '*freedom from want*' America used as a slogan in Europe. However, the United States had its own plan behind its desire to distribute economic well-being in Europe. Franklin D. Roosevelt had Stated that the major purpose in America's participation in the war was the spread of the four freedoms: speech, religion, freedom from want and from fear. The third freedom meant the establishment of an economic stability that Europe did not have, and this became the main focus for political stabilisation (Cavallo 1985: 759).

Italy provided the prospect being an ideal partner for such an enterprise, which, following an initial period of dependence upon America, would provide its citizens with economic prosperity: Americans were in fact described by President Roosevelt's speech on 12 October 1944 'not as conquerors but as liberators' (United States Department of State 1946: 92). Between April 1948 and January 1952 Italy had received '11% of the total pool which

represented the third highest amount awarded to the ERP [European Recovery Program] countries' (Whelan 2003: 313); Durand Smith in the Department of State Bulletin on 13 June 1948, clarified that the 'Aid From America' was actually a 'gift', which was in line with a foreign relations policy aimed at depicting itself as 'motivated by philanthropy and disinterested good will in dealing with other people' (Whitfield 1991: 57)²².

However, if the plan worked, a better economy in Italy—as in the rest of Europe—would mean that American trade with Europe would benefit from it. 'Prosperity Makes You Free' was the slogan of the Marshall Plan. However, this American way of life had to be adapted to different European cultures, which at times were not ready for the process of Americanisation. Despite instances of well-established, large-scale manufacturing plants, such as Fiat's car plant in Turin and shipyards in Genoa, Italy's overall economy was still so heavily weighted towards the small enterprise/artisan tradition it was effectively impossible to transform into one that was centred on mass production²³. The process of 'imitation' of American productivity—as Zamagni termed it—was therefore difficult to apply.

However, the United States still played a crucial role in Italy's post-war reconstruction: the American economic support gave Italy not only the strength to create a 'new future', but also the strength to fight against Leftism that might have developed greater vitality had conditions of economic poverty continued for longer²⁴. In Italy the use of economic aid was used to influence the configuration of domestic Italian politics (Forsyth 1998) up to the point that the outcome of Italy's economic miracle (1958–1963) has led some historians to include Italy as amongst the 'most Americanized of all the Western European countries in these years' (Ellwood 1992 : 231).

The theory of the Americanisation of Italy has been extensively examined by scholars like Forgacs and Gundle, who not only state the need of America that Italians had, but also question whether Americanisation might be simply autochthonous trends wrongly attributed to American influence (Gundle 1995: 151; Forgacs 1993: 159). In his book on the history of the Communist culture, Gundle (1995: 67, 114–115, 147) refers to how American lifestyle was an ever-present phenomenon in the life of Italians, citing examples, such as magazine articles that dealt with the American 'way of life' that served to promote it, beauty contests in which the idea of beauty needed to be Italian and not American, and Italian comic strips that pretended to be American but which still clearly showed an Italian influence. Cases such as these can be analysed in terms of glocalization theory: Pier Paolo D'Atorre describes such instances as 'adaptations that were anything but passive towards cross-Atlantic models' (D'Atorre 1991: 31, 130).

The conflicting relationship between a Catholic ethic and a growing consumerism has been analysed by Michael Novak in his book *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1993), where the author investigates this incongruous relation since the nineteenth century in order to establish 'the moral effects on families and individuals of the new ethos of the

industrialized age' (Novak 1993: 11). When specifically referring to the time here analysed, Novak States that even from Leo XIII, who did not seem to take any particular position towards the free market, there still was a clear preference of the market economy and private property in comparison to the any form of authoritarianism which would have compromised not only political freedom but also moral values²⁵.

Moreover, as the ERP information guaranteed, productivity 'would result in betterment of living conditions, social progress, ability to defend democratic institutions' (Ellwood 1985: 232; see also Habbblethwaite 1995: 70). By looking at productivity from such a perspective, it became possible for the Catholic Church to reconcile a model that it had not been easy for it to accept. By proposing to achieve, amongst the main post-war objectives, 'nations' prosperity', Pius XII seemed to endorse, together with security and freedom, the drive towards productivity that was the primary expression of Americanism itself (Atti e discorsi di Pio XII 1947: 157–169).

Moreover, the conflict against Communism had made America the standard bearer—and the 'gendarme'—of the clerical, conservative and 'peasant' culture of Christian Democrat Italy (Cavallo 1985: 785). From 1867 to 1939 the Vatican and the United States had not had direct diplomatic relations. However, a close relationship was established by Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII, when the former sent Myron Taylor as his personal representative to the pontiff. Taylor met the Pope on a weekly basis; this contrasted with the occasional audiences that granted to other diplomats (Di Nolfo 1978: 13).

The importance of this new 'alliance' with the United States was indicated by the high-level nature of the official American delegation that attended the funeral of Pius XII: a 'departure from previous U.S. diplomatic practices', if one considers that at the death of Pope Pius XI in 1939 'the United States did not sent a special emissary or delegation to the funeral' (Foreign Relations 1958–1960, both Volume VII, p. 882). Upon succeeding to the presidency of the United States, Truman chose to retain Taylor as his Personal Representative in the Vatican—as Galante (1978: 116) affirms—because of his awareness of the strategic importance of the Christian values in the political asset of the post-war period (see also Confessore 1984: 27):

Between the end of '45 and the first few months of '46 the shape of the *pax americana* began to become clearer and Truman's acute sensibility for the moral aspect of political problems led him to realize very clearly the importance of the outer layer of 'Christian Principles' of which the Holy See was the depositary. The 'ideological' terrain of the alliance was thus defined along at least three essential lines: it was up to De Gasperi's DC, in Italy, to deal with the practical aspects.

The main foundation of Western capitalism seemed to coincide with the Roman Catholic strain of Christianity, whose principles would ensure the Truman Doctrine a degree of authority (Galante 1978: 158). In his correspondence

with Pius XII, Truman expressed an interest in contributing 'to a consent of all the forces striving for a moral world'²⁶. This was an outstanding position from a country which had seen Catholicism spreading vastly from the end of the nineteenth century and which 'during the height of the Cold War [. . .] discovered how useful the invocation of the highest hosanna could be' (Saunders 1999: 279). From the Vatican's point of view, by strengthening its relation with the United States Government, it also had the prospect of intervening more effectively in Italian domestic politics (Carretto 1996: 114; Gatti 1991: 23). From the American perspective, the relationship presented with a means of bypassing the Italian Government; when, at the war's end, the United States started sending economic aid to Italy, they preferred to do so through the medium of the Vatican and the Papal Aid Commission (PCA): 'Substantial aid donated by the American Government to Catholics in that country (Italy), so that by passing through their channels to the PCA, they avoided passing through the Italian Government' (Giovagnoli 1978: 1083).

As 'Hollywood cinema was one of the most efficient channels of Americanization' (Muscio 2000: 119), the relationship between the Catholic Church and America played a role in the spread of Americanism through American movies. Gundle (1991: 249) defines the 'other' America that Catholics referred to: one that included Catholic actors and actresses, such as Bing Crosby and Loretta Young, who proved how Hollywood was not always the expression of evil that many people believed it to be. Many film stars, in fact, helped significantly in the process of the modernization of Italy more in their publicity campaigns on popular magazines than in their movie roles: actors portrayed in their beautiful homes with their spouse and children gave a different image of Hollywood lifestyle, which suited the Church and the current Italian Government and was one of the many appeals to Italian audiences of what Dyer (1998: 35) defines as the 'fabulousness' of Hollywood.

The images of American actresses in a domestic environment served several functions: to give a positive response to this ideological tension, to promote consumption in the modern home, and, last but not least, to side with the prevailing political forces after 1948, the Democratic Christians (Muscio 2000: 124). Some American film stars were used in Christian Democrat political propaganda, almost as evidence that the Hollywood lifestyle was compatible with the dominant ideology (Barbanti 1991: 182). In an interview in relation to the attitude of the Church towards Hollywood stars, the movie actor—and President of the United States—Ronald Reagan stated not only that the 'post-war consumer culture provided the foundation for happy marriages and healthy children' but also that actors, who 'settle in one place, build homes, raise their children, attend school and churches and become part of the community' were now somehow approved by the Church (quoted in May 1989: 146). Therefore, the consumer culture did not seem to represent a problem for the Catholic world so as long as the

image that came with it defended and promoted Christian values. Who had to supervise and keep under surveillance the moral interests of the people?

To whom—we ask ourselves—will it fall to defend these highest interests of man; whose task will it be to watch over this great and powerful means so that it is always used according to its proper nature? To the Church and to the State, who by divine mandate are charged with protecting the salvation of souls and the common good, they have the right and the duty to keep watch so that harmful films are not produced, or, if they are produced, do not circulate in an uncontrolled way, and, in case they do circulate, so that individuals, who do not want to be harmed, are promptly protected from their negative influence. (Canals 1961: 23–24)

It was the responsibility of the Church and the Italian State to defend and supervise a strong medium such as cinema, in order to ensure no damage would be done.

This chapter has not only confirmed that the strong American attempt in terms of containment of Soviet power and the suffocation of the left in any country that expressed suggestion of political change towards that direction was clearly shared by the Vatican. Moreover, it has explored the presence of common themes in their ‘cultural’ propaganda, by looking at American and the Vatican official primary sources.

If the Americanisation process—crucial in post-war Italy—was modified by what Gundle (1986: 569) terms ‘Catholic forces’, the contradictions that were intrinsic to the relationship between Americanisation and Catholicism in Italy emerged as the two forces started to interact. On the one hand, as America had become the expression of modernity, the Catholics had to find a way to reconcile themselves to it with regard to their own morality. On the other hand, there was still—as Wanrooij (1991: 212) calls it—an identification of Americanisation with ‘a negative shift in moral and social order’. In Italy, Americanisation had become synonymous with individual consumerism and this something that was not easy for the Catholic Church to accept (Gundle 1995: 152; Ventrone 1991: 146). The Americans did not embody that ‘Christian civilization’ endorsed by Pope Pius XII and they brought with them a ‘practical materialism, epitomized by Hollywood, which was hardly better than the theoretical materialism found in the Soviet Union’ (Hebblethwaite 1995: 68).

While these unsolved and complex tensions between Americanisation, the Vatican and post-war Italy dealt with in this third section of the chapter are central when looking at American intervention on Italian cultural matters, it is still crucial to unveil the attitude of the Italian State towards the relationship between national film industry and America. This will be offered in the next chapter, while Chapter 4 will address the role of the Church in relation to American and Italian cinema.

3 The State, Cinema Legislation and American Interests

This chapter looks at the relationship between Italian Government policy towards the cinema during the period 1945–1960 and the American film industry. The purpose of this is to investigate how, and to what extent, the Christian Democrats' cultural policy favoured the interests of the American film industry and reflected the American and Vatican cultural ideologies. It will examine the *Dipartimento dello spettacolo* (Body responsible for the performance, arts and entertainment) both in the role of financial supporter of national film productions and as the censor of national and international films. This will make possible an assessment of the extent to which the *Dipartimento dello spettacolo* acted in correspondence with a precise strategy that had been formulated by the United States Department of State and the Vatican.

Several academics have examined the Italian cinema legislation of the post-war period. Bizzarri and Solaroli (1958) published a structured analysis of it, while Quaglietti (1980) sought to place it in the context of an historical reconstruction of the cinema legislation that stretched from the Fascist period to the 1970s. Brunetta (1982) used archival documentation to provide a complete work on post-war Italian cinema. However, as yet no attempt has been made to link Italian film industry legislation of the immediate post-war period to the role of the American Government, American film production and the Vatican. This chapter seeks to address the subject.

The argument that follows consists of five parts. The first section examines the role of the Christian Democrats with particular regard to Giulio Andreotti. Andreotti was a Christian Democrat representative, and served as a close link between the Italian State and the Vatican. From 31 May 1947 until 12 January 1954, he was appointed the Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. This made explicit his significant influence within the development of the Italian film industry. Andreotti's role within the Christian Democratic Party and successive Christian Democrat Governments made him the foremost State figure in post-war Italian cinema. His role needs to be considered with particular attention in order to provide a clear reconstruction of the period's events.

The second part will analyse if and how the 'unblocking'² policy towards foreign films adopted from 1945 by the Italian Government restricted the

development of Italian films and enabled American films to flood Italian cinema market. The issue of dubbing will be investigated in this context because it represented an important aspect of cinema legislation and better defined the relationship between American and Italian producers when the law on dubbing was approved.

The third section will deal with the issue of State censorship and its role in the rebuilding of Italian national cinema. The fourth section will look at the nationality of films in relation to the current legislation of the time and it will also examine American and Italian co-productions, and how they benefitted from screen quotas and received State credit and tax rebates. The fifth and final part will address the 1951 agreements between Italian and American producers, which enforced the distribution of American films in Italy with the support of the Dipartimento dello spettacolo and the Italian film industry. This section will include an investigation into how the agreements affected the development of Italian cinema and substantially helped American production companies to establish a manufacturing presence in Italy.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND GIULIO ANDREOTTI: THEIR ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT, THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CATHOLIC WORLD AND WITH AMERICA

Italy emerged from the Second World War torn by internal conflict and materially exhausted. The support for the Catholic Church, which had a wide presence in Italian society, was to prove an important factor in the development of the Christian Democratic Party and in its total political and Governmental hegemony³. During the immediate post-conflict period Italian Catholics sought to distance themselves from the disgraced Fascist regime and to build a new party, whose democracy, as Alcide De Gasperi told Palmiro Togliatti, would be characterised by the epithet 'Christian' (Andreotti 1975: 33). The Christian Democrats sought to create a mass party, an expression of the Resistance and a strong bulwark to any form of totalitarianism. The party tried to be inspired by the central principles of Christianity, and did not want the Roman Catholic Church to become a Government department (De Gasperi 1974: 17–19).

This aim was somewhat contradicted by reality. According to Pietro Scoppola, the idea of separating the Catholic Church from the political arena did not seem to be exactly what most Italian Catholics wanted. Scoppola (1975: 41–42) believes that the concept of 'ecclesiologia' (authority of the Church) that was fostered by Pope Pius XII, who forcefully condemned all those who wanted to keep the Church away from public life, was supported by most Italian Catholics who were impatient to get back into politics. This attempt to restore a Christian society through the use of the State, which had already started with Pius XI and his alliance with the Fascist regime, became with Pius XII a desire to identify the Christian society with

a Catholic party (Parisella 2000: 101). Francesco Malgeri (1987: 8), the first historian to publish a complete work on the history of the Christian Democratic Party, states that Pius XII felt the Vatican had the right to intervene and to guide political forces, especially if those forces claimed to be inspired by the principles of Christianity. For the Pope this meant that Catholic politics had to serve the values of the Catholic Church. Therefore, it is certain that the difficult task the party had to tackle was the attempt to balance its interest in becoming the expression of Catholic forces while at the same time maintaining its independence and freedom from the influence of the Catholic Church. However it was De Gasperi himself who felt it necessary for the success of the new party to draw the Church, the Pope and his close collaborators directly into the political arena, even if this meant withdrawing from the Popular Party principles, which had been the starting point of the Christian Democrats.

It was during this time that the 'second' generation of Christian Democrat leaders started to emerge, first by supporting the 'former Popular Party members' and then by replacing them in the development of the Catholic Party (Giovagnoli 1991: 187). Agostino Giovagnoli (1991: 187) portrays this second generation as being dominated by strong religious feelings. This was particularly true in the cases of those coming from the Catholic universities or from the Federation of Catholic University Students.

It was amongst this young generation of Catholics that Giulio Andreotti developed his passion for politics. The Federation of Catholic University Students provided him with the opportunity to come into contact with those who would prove to be his political colleagues and collaborators, from Adriano Ossicini to Aldo Moro. It was in this context that he started his political career in 1940, replacing Aldo Moro, who decided to leave the organization.

As yet, little has been written by academics on Giulio Andreotti. Two biographies have provided a superficial analysis of his political life and his role in the Christian Democratic Party but unfortunately both lack depth in their reconstruction of his role in the development of Italian cinema in the post-war period. What emerges from these books is essentially Andreotti's link with the Vatican: he became known as 'the little Pope' or 'the Pope's pupil' because of the close relationship he managed to develop with Pius XII and for the respect that that Pope came to have for him. Andreotti was also one of the closest collaborators of Alcide De Gasperi in the crucial months between the end of the war and the establishment of the first Republic in 1946. De Gasperi became Prime Minister in December 1945 and two years later he appointed Andreotti to a leading role in the Government as the State Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. This role, which Andreotti kept for seven years, enabled him to develop a close contact with the Vatican.

This trustworthy relationship with the Vatican, together with the warm personal regard in which the Pope held him, was a major factor in Andreotti's



Figure 3.1 Giulio Andreotti, courtesy Corbis.

political career. He kept the pontiff informed about what dangers the Christian Democrats believed that the Communists posed to Italian society, an issue that was of particular concern to the Pope. In the view of Malgeri (1987: 240), Andreotti felt that the fight against Communism was a high priority for the Christian Democrats, to be pursued even through strategic alliances.

In an article in the newspaper *Il Popolo* in May 1947, Andreotti Stated that the three-party alliance between the Christian Democrats, the Communists and the Socialists had ended. This development is believed to have stemmed from pressures that were applied on the Christians Democrats by the American State Department and the Vatican. De Gasperi is believed to have had a meeting with a Vatican representative, who suggested that his party would not receive any support from the Vatican if it retained any form of working relationship with 'the anti-clerical parties' (Orfei 1975: 46).⁴ Ruggero Orfei (1975: 48) asserts that not only did the Christian Democratic Party represent the interests of the Vatican but also those of America. The close relationship that existed between the United States and the Christian Democratic Party in the immediate post-war period has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny; De Gasperi's foreign policy, his 1947 visit to the United States to establish the main principles of the alliance with America, and the effects of the Marshall Plan in Italy have been the subject of extensive study. However, as Angelo Ventrone (1991: 142) affirms, it is no longer possible to see the Christian Democrats as the American party, because in time the Christian Democrats had to win the trust of the American political class, overcoming both the mistrust of the latter and internal resistance in the Catholic world itself. Many were suspicious of those in the Christian Democratic Party who opposed the United States Government's influence, especially with regard to the military issues. However when faced with the political threat that Communism posed in Italy, a common line was taken by the party and a close relationship between the United States and the Christian Democratic Party developed both through attempts to alienate left wing parties from participating in the Government alliance and through also seeking to promote American influence in the Mediterranean region (Galante 1978: 113–115). In this context, the pressure exerted by the Vatican proved a decisive factor. What the Pope asked for was 'order' and 'anti-communism', demands that the Americans were willing to endorse⁵.

The close link between the Vatican and America emerges very strongly when looking at the reconstruction of the Christian Democratic Party and the development of its representatives. These two aspects are also relevant to Andreotti's political career, and in particular during the period 31 May 1947 until 12 January 1954, when he was the Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, a leading role in the Government.

It was in this office, in conjunction with other responsibilities that he exercised, that Andreotti came to exert the foremost role in the reconstruction of Italian cinema in the post-Fascist era. In an official capacity, he supervised cinema legislation, while also overseeing policy areas such as censorship of national and international films and funding of national productions.

For the first time since 1944, it was the Presidency of the Council of Ministers which started in 1947 to authorise films to be released in Italian cinemas. Gian Piero Brunetta (1982: 52) ascribes this structural arrangement to Andreotti and to the second article of the new law, which

instituted 'an office for cinematography directly depended on the Presidency of the Council' with the widest possible responsibilities (Quaglietti 1980: 50). The decree regarding the Organization of the Italian Cinematic Industry set out the tasks entrusted by the Government to the Office of Cinematography. Such an office in fact: (a) implements the provisions put in place to the benefit of the national cinema industry; (b) ascertains the nationality of films; (c) promotes and oversees relationships concerning cinematic exchanges with other countries; (d) carries out the assignments required of the State by dispositions regarding Government surveillance of cinematic reels; and (e) carries out surveillance of bodies, the activities and the assignments required by the current law and by others⁶.

It was intended clearly that the Undersecretary to the Show Business should completely control the character of the film industry of the time, having under his control the Office of Cinematography. Andreotti shaped the rebirth of the Italian cinema industry, even if, at times, he chose to exercise his influence in a latent manner, such that he became labelled as 'The Great Invisible Man' (Chiarini 1954: 84). At times this led him to be accused of total inertia, rather than a proactive style (Quaglietti 1980: 57). The reason for this attitude was seen by Libero Bizzarri (1987: 50) as an attempt not to strengthen the industry. The product of a strong and free cinema frightened Andreotti, who was the most able and relentless enemy of a new and lively Italian cinema. In order to demonstrate this, it is very important to investigate Andreotti's cinema policy in relation to his ideology and his close links with the Vatican. This aspect will be dealt with in the following paragraphs in the context of the American film industry and will shed light on Andreotti's political and cultural strategies.

UNBLOCKING FOREIGN FILMS: PRODUCERS, DISTRIBUTORS AND EXHIBITORS IN A LEGAL BATTLE

From 1938 until the end of World War II, American films were officially restricted in Italy by the creation of the State Monopoly of Foreign Film Acquisition set up by the Fascist regime. Before then Italy had been flooded with American films and so the appetite for Hollywood's output returned as soon as it was available again.

Italy represented a major market for Hollywood films (Wagstaff 1995: 96), especially at a time when the 1948 Paramount decree separated the studios' production and distribution from the exhibition. This meant that the European market assumed a greater importance for the American film production companies than it had previously occupied (Lev 1993: 18). The growing importance of the export market was also reflected in the content of many American films, which were made with the precise intention of pleasing foreign audiences (Guback 1969: 11). When considering the success of cinema in Italy, it was vital for the American production companies

that their films should penetrate and succeed in the Italian market, as Italy had one of the highest global cinema expansion rates in terms of audiences and the lowest ratio of cinema seats per inhabitant.

The American restoration of the European film industry presented a series of distinct phases. After the liberation of the occupied countries by the Allies, the Americans needed to bring in 'necessary equipment, electrical power and suitable films'; in the period of 'military Government', they would ensure that 'stocks of films available would have been screened'; and once the 'stable national regimes were in place', the American motion picture companies would deal directly with the new Governments (Jarvie 1992: 373–374). During this period, thousands of prints films were distributed by the Allied Military Government through the Psychological Welfare Branch (which was a *de facto* propaganda military office) and the Film Board, which was a professional association of rental companies (Muscio 1989: 92). Bizzarri and Solaroli (1958: 203) defined their activity as completely and utterly deleterious because flooding the market with American films without any 'censorship licence' would hinder national production and prevented it flourishing. In Chapter 5 we will see how this was true only during certain years.

In 1945 the Temporary Commission for Cinematography was established in Rome. It gathered representatives from the Italian producers, distributors, exhibitors, the American production companies, as well as officials from the United States and British embassies in the city. In the Commission's sessions it became apparent not only that the organisations that were represented on it had conflicting interests, but also that there was a strong alliance between the American production companies and the Italian exhibitors (Quaglietti 1980: 39). This relationship derived on one hand from the desire to satisfy the U.S. Government, and on the other from a real interest from the Italian distributors into the American hits because American films were cheaper and the only ones available to fill their lists (Sorlin 1996: 84).

The relationship between the American production houses and the Italian exhibitors was not always easy and forthright. In October 1945 the AGIS launched its journal *Bollettino di informazioni*. The journal reveals that the exhibitors resented those decisions made by the American production companies that they felt went against their own interests. In an open letter dated 1 December 1945, the AGIS attacked the system of 'percentage rental with a guaranteed minimum', enforced by the American picture houses⁷.

These sentiments of discontent were to recur on several occasions. The following year the situation had not changed and the system of the 'guaranteed minimum' was defined as 'barbarian' in another denunciation (1 March 1946) and the procedure not appreciated by the exhibitors⁸. The representatives of the American production companies strongly defended their positions. In a series of letters to the *Bollettino*, directors of Metro Goldwyn Mayer and Fox called for agreement in the mutual interest of both parties⁹.

These spats occurred within a broader co-operative relationship that existed between the Italian exhibitors and the American production companies, one that had a shared aim of eliminating any law that sought to restrict the import of American films in Italy. Together they lobbied the Government, which met their demands by issuing the liberal decree (Decreto legislativo Luogotenenziale 678, 5 November 1945). This development was obviously not welcomed by the Italian producers, who would have preferred protection for their activities. However, it was welcomed by the American production companies who had in mind a clear political strategy: exporting to foreign markets at such favourable rates for local importers that any competition would be prevented, and the birth or development of a national industry made difficult. This specific *politics of price discrimination* is described as 'dumping' by Paolo Bafile (1986: 75) in the context of international commerce, and the consequence of this dumping policy of American producers will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The main outcome of the Commission for Cinematography was the October 1945 total repeal of restrictions on cinema production and distribution. The discussions held at the Commission for Cinematography had been, according to Brunetta, directed by the American companies, who refused any form of quota in the screening of Italian-made films in Italian cinemas. The power to enforce certain decisions in the interests of U.S. production companies was effectively in the hands of the Americans who would in 1947 succeed in getting a law (Legge n. 379, 16 May 1947) approved, which would protect their economic interests (Brunetta 1982: 50).

Francesco Libonati, the first Undersecretary for the Press, Entertainment and Tourism, tried in 1945 to obtain the approval of the Americans for the requirement of screening national films (Quaglietti 1980: 40–43). However, the American production companies felt that any such systems might adversely affect their interests in Italy. The exhibitors gave their clear support for the deregulation of foreign film distribution in the country and suggestions from Americans acted as the basis for of the Legislative Lieutenantcy Decree (n. 678), which was approved on 5 October 1945. The decree established the framework of the Italian cinema industry, creating an environment that the American production companies were able to dominate. In 1961, Lorenzo Favilli (1961: 19) describes the importance of the measure stating that 'with the aforementioned decree the protectionist apparatus which had been in effect up until that point was dismantled'. The decree repealed the protective system that the Fascist regime had created for the Italian cinema industry by abrogating all the monopoly laws with regards to: the importation and distribution of foreign films; the obligatory screening of Italian films; and the dubbing law.

The Monopolio-Enic, a decree introduced by the Fascist regime in April 1939 to control the entry into Italy of foreign films, had produced, together with the forced withdrawal of the major American production companies from Italy, a substantial expansion of national production. During the

period 1930–1937 the number of films produced annually ranged between 20 and 40, while after 1939 between 80 and 120 were made each year (see table in footnote)¹⁰. This successful attempt to stimulate national production was certainly an unrepeatable phenomenon, which was superseded by the invasion of American films and the development of a certain kind of national production (Bizzarri 1987: 48).

Favilli (1961: 20) calls the new Legislative Lieutenantcy Decree ‘the sudden transformation of the structure of the cinematic system from a centrally-run economy to a free market economy’. This perhaps paraphrases what Libonati had previously suggested in a note discussed at the Commission for Cinematography, when he said that a law which drew on such ideas would be extremely liberal and favourable to the Allied countries’ cinema industries. It entailed shifting from a system of strict monopoly and indiscriminate subsidisation of the national industry to a system which instead put into effect the principles of free-market competition (Quaglietti 1980: 41).

In a parliamentary debate (6 May 1947), the approval of the Legislative Lieutenantcy Decree was strongly criticised by the MP Olindo Vernocchi (President in the immediate post-war period of the Istituto Nazionale Luce Nuova) who made known his views on the way American production companies had interfered in the shaping of the decree¹¹. However, for the exhibitors the situation was far from satisfactory. The Italian exhibitors called on the Italian producers to ensure that their output was of a high enough quality to compete with the American production industry. They also requested that the Government raise the number of films needed for the industry to more than 300, which was the average of films shown in 1938, before the beginning of the Fascist monopoly¹². The Government accepted their request from 1946, fixing the total contingent of American films for 1946 at 140¹³.

Therefore, for the year 1946 eight major American production companies—Metro Goldwyn, Paramount, Warner Brothers, Fox, Columbia, Universal, United Artists and RKO—were each allowed sixteen films. Independent productions were assigned an allowance of twelve. This meant that 140 American films could be screened in Italy. This decision, according to a view amongst the exhibitors, would not compromise the development of the Italian film industry, protected by an agreement between the Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche e Affini (ANICA) (the Producers’ Association) and the AGIS, which would allow a minimum of sixty Italian films per year to be shown in Italian cinemas¹⁴.

This agreement was signed on the 10 January 1946, giving the impression that the Italian film industry would enjoy a degree of protection. The AGIS regarded the agreement as compensation for the removal of controls on foreign films and as a response to the formula adopted by the ministries of free-market importation¹⁵.

However, on the 1 May 1946 the exhibitors still felt ‘all at sea’ with the agreements, because while they felt they had been applying the ANICA-AGIS arrangement allowing a certain number of national films to be shown,

they were still waiting for 'compensation for the removal of controls on foreign films'. The exhibitors' association made it clear that if the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the ANICA would not respect the condition of the free import of foreign films, it would not be possible to observe the convention for the protection of Italian film underwritten on January 10. The exhibitors' threat had its intended effect. In July of the same year, the Government told them that their freedom to import foreign films could be exercised without their having to operate under any restraints.

In March 1947 the approval of Cappa's law (Legge n. 379) gave a semblance of protection for national production. It was with the implementation of this new legislation that, according to Quaglietti (1980: 12), the Christian Democrats started to involve themselves in the film industry again. Paolo Cappa was a Christian Democrat member of Parliament, elected for the *Assemblea Costituente*¹⁶ as a party representative, who was appointed Undersecretary for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in July 1946 and kept his position until the arrival of Giulio Andreotti the following year. He defined himself as a 'layman in cinematic affairs' but he defended his law because it was not the result of an 'improvisation by laymen'¹⁷. The law was debated at length by the *Assemblea Costituente*.

The three main features of the measure were: the creation of an office directly dependent from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which would deal with the film industry; the compulsory screening of Italian films in Italian cinemas; and the increase in funding for film production within Italy. The first of the three was seen by the opposition to the Christian Democrats as a way of placing the film industry under the direct control of a Christian Democrat nominee. Giovanna Grignaffini (1989: 41) affirms that this measure had 'political and ideological implications'. This was proven right when Giulio Andreotti became Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and exerted his power on Italian cinema. The 18 April 1948 political elections gave the Christian Democrats a strong hold over the Italian Parliament and increased this power (Grignaffini 1989: 41).

The part of the proposed cinema law on which most of the parliamentary debates focused and the Christian Democrats could exert their power over was the proposal to increase the funding for national film production. This relegated the crucial aspect of the compulsory screening to a secondary position. Many of the Socialist and Communist MPs were strongly against the further increase of 2% State subsidies to national film production compared to the 10% funding already accepted by the 1945 decree. They argued that this did not happen in any other country and that in Italy such a measure would not help the general economic situation. They termed this policy a form of 'protectionism', which was not being applied to any other national industries¹⁸. They also accused the producers of being the ones behind this article of the law because it would only benefit their sectional interests and not those of the national film industry as a whole¹⁹. It was the Socialist MP Giambattista Pera who linked this aspect of the

legislation to an attempt from the Christian Democrats to control totally the film industry. In this regard, the composition of the membership of the Consultative Commission becomes relevant since its members were to vote on Articles 4, 5 and 7, which dealt with funding of artistic films and compulsory screening. It does not come as a surprise that, in a document written by AGIS, several members of the Consultative Commission were also members of the Christian Democrat Party²⁰.

Cappa, who was a supporter of the importance of the State funding of national films, allowed himself to be persuaded to endorse a proposal to eliminate the 2% previously proposed²¹. He justified this change of stance by showing how much the main focus remained on keeping the compulsory screening to its minimum²². Moreover, he was aware that the acceptance of the abrogation of the increase of the subsidy would cause far greater damage to the independent production businesses, rather than the large production companies, which had less need of State funds since they had the scale to work in collaboration with foreign companies²³.

Cappa also agreed on the extension of compulsory screening from 15 per term to 20 per term, despite the fact that the majority of the opposition had on several occasions suggested that only by enforcing the screening of at least 100 Italian films a year could the national film industry be helped²⁴. The result, eighty films a year, kept the Italian producers relatively happy but was not well accepted by either the American production companies or the Italian exhibitors who felt this legislation threatened or at least compromised the primacy of American films in Italy. The exhibitors defined the new legislation as 'the law of the Croesus of production' and accused the decision of the eighty days' compulsory screening as being impossible to uphold, since Italian production was not able to cover the 80 compulsory screenings²⁵.

While the long delay in discussing the law could have been a consequence of the pressure exerted by the major American production companies, when Andreotti became Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, he re-established his relationship with the exhibitors who defined his activity as 'courageous, pro-active and extremely intelligent'²⁶. Gian Piero Brunetta (1982: 52) believes that Andreotti deserved such laudatory words because he had allowed the exhibitors to ignore the eighty days' compulsory screening article of the law. Using a Circolare ministeriale dated 10 July 1947, Andreotti had transferred control of the cinemas from the police to the Dipartimento dello spettacolo, thereby creating conditions in which the rules could be transgressed with less worry of there being an adverse reaction from officialdom²⁷. Quaglietti (1980: 55) details the consequences of this shift, affirming that at one point in the Dipartimento dello spettacolo office there were more than 6,000 files, for each of which the officials in charge must have possessed investigations which had never been completed.

Andreotti had demonstrated the power of his Via Veneto office: the accommodation that Andreotti had reached with the exhibitors forced the

left-wing parties to fight a 'defensive' battle to try to secure the survival of Italian national cinema (Zanchi 1999: 87–88). The State had exercised its control of the film industry; many of the employees of the public administration came from a Christian Democrat background and those who did not fit within the plan had to leave (Brunetta 1982: 47). Andreotti and his fellow members of the second generation of Christian Democrat leaders believed in a strong relationship between the political party and the State and at the same time they also had to respond to a clear request from the Catholic world. Andreotti's control over the film industry would become even clearer in December 1949 when a new law was passed which became known as Andreotti's law. This law will be discussed in detail in the next section.

In July 1949 Andreotti approved the reintroduction of the 'little law' or 'tax on dubbing'. Dubbing was central to the relationship between American and Italian producers. After an expensive and unsuccessful attempt to produce American films in different languages, Hollywood tried by 1931 to dub its output in the United States. This too was unsuccessful, as Hollywood dubbing studios employed Italians who had strong Californian accents. In October 1933 a law (Regio Decreto Legge 5 October 1933, n. 1414) was passed in Italy that established that a tax of £2,500,000 had to be paid on any dubbed film and that films dubbed abroad could not be shown in Italy (Quaglietti 1980: 17). This law was abrogated in October 1945 and by 1946 an industry that dubbed foreign films into Italian had emerged in Italy²⁸.

Quaglietti, Bizzarri and Solaroli have studied the events that preceded Andreotti's decision to reintroduce the 'dubbing voucher' in July 1949. The trio attribute this decision not to the pressure of the cinema artists who gathered in Piazza del Popolo in Rome in February 1949 to ask the Government to defend the national film industry. Rather, they believe that the decision was made because of the pressure exerted on the Government by the producers. With this law, those who wanted to import foreign films needed to pay into a special fund in the *Sezione per il credito cinematografico* at the *Banca nazionale del lavoro* the sum of £2,500,000. This money was expressly to be used for subsidising national films. In law the 'dubbing voucher' was not a tax *per se* but rather a 'forced loan' which was, according to Quaglietti (1980: 62), Andreotti's winning point because it meant that the money could be taken back by the company that had paid it in the first place. This was strongly questioned in Parliament by the left-wing opposition, concerned at whether foreign companies would be able to release their frozen money. The Communist MPs Bruno Corbi and Giulio Turchi Stated that the introduction of the 'dubbing voucher' was a means to assist American companies to transfer their Italian-derived money back to the United States. Ernesto Rossi (1960: 101) accuses the ANICA of using the 'little law' to take advantage of the 'dubbing vouchers', as the producers, with the collaboration of staff of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, set up a very mysterious company, the Italian

Cinematographic Activity (ACI), which would acquire the vouchers at very low prices, receiving in exchange the release of funds which had been frozen in Italy for American producers²⁹.

It is possible to build on this view to argue that, while Andreotti was trying to please the producers with the 'dubbing vouchers', at the same time he was able to not upset the American production companies, who could easily get hold of their money, while also managing to keep the exhibitors happy by declaring in an article of the law (Article 10) that the percentage of national and foreign films shown in Italy would be decided on an annual basis³⁰. This attempt to create a serene atmosphere among all the categories of the film industry was admitted by Andreotti himself in an interview with the author. In 2004, when asked whether the Government felt the pressure of the U.S. production companies and the Italian exhibitors, Andreotti States that he managed to create a great collaboration between production, distribution and exhibition which was not only of fundamental importance but also a way to increase the value of national production.

In the parliamentary debates that accompanied the approval of the dubbing voucher in the *Camera dei Deputati*, the lower parliamentary chamber, this measure was actively championed by Andreotti. When it was discussed in the Senate, Andreotti was the subject of hostile criticism with regard to his relationship with American companies. Umberto Terracini, a Communist senator, questioned him about the unblocking of foreign frozen money³¹. Andreotti's reply throws light on the relationship between American and Italian production companies. He States that:

All of the profits from these imported American films had to go into a current account at the Bank of America and Italy, and to release funds an authorization from the Ministry for Foreign Trade had to be obtained on each separate occasion. The norms stipulate that the primary reason for which the funds would be released would be if they were to be used in the cinematographic field, and so we had some American Studios (typically Columbia) who used all their profits from Italy to produce films in this country³².

It is through this form of investment that the Italian production company Film Costellazione was constituted: a company directed by the Christian Democrat Mario Melloni and with collaborators such as Diego Fabbri and Turi Vasile, all certified Catholics (Franco 1993: 51).

In the interview with the author mentioned above (2004), Andreotti reiterates this concept, giving the example of how the money earned by a film production had to be invested 'in making productions', but at times could also been used for 'supporting works'. Andreotti gives the example of how, 'with an agreement with Producers, the Pontifical American College of the North in Gianicolo was built with the profits from showing American films in Italy'. What Andreotti omits to say was that that investment was forced

to be made when he discovered an illegal deal between some religious institutes and the American producers in order to transfer the U.S. money back to America.

STATE CENSORSHIP AND ITS ROLE IN THE REBUILDING OF ITALIAN NATIONAL CINEMA

Andreotti's cinema law, approved on 29 December 1949, created a strong centralisation of power that Christian Democrat politicians were able to exercise. This State of affairs was in line with the wishes of the Vatican, which offered Andreotti and his Government a clear commandment: 'watch over and be selective'. This instruction characterised Andreotti's work as Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. He executed a cinema policy that sought both to respect Catholic morality and to favour the American film production industry.

Andreotti's law and the parliamentary debates that had accompanied its passage reveal that the opposition's principal concerns were with regard to the national film industry. The measure had to be approved urgently since Cappa's law (1947) was due to expire on 31 December 1949. Parliamentary interventions imply that the draft form of the measure was circulated only a short time before it was due to be considered by the legislature³³.

The first controversial issue raised in the *Camera dei Deputati*'s deliberations was the composition of the Technical Commission, which was given the power of judging the quality of Italian-made films. The measure proposed a 'bonus of 8% of their box-office gross to films of "artistic quality"—this "quality" being determined by a board of officials' (Sorlin 1996: 87–88). The opposition took exception to the way in which it appeared that the Board's membership would be made up principally of Ministry officials and not of representatives from the artistic world³⁴.

A comparison of Italian and American film industries reveals that the presence of Government official types was paralleled in the United States, although in a different way. In America, former governors and former White House advisers headed up the main production companies and, even without any allocation of funds, the cinema industry was at the centre of American national and international policy. The opposite was true of Italy, where financial subsidies were contrasted against a lack of policy to develop or protect the national film industry (Contaldo and Fanelli 1986: 25–26).

The involvement of State funding in the Italian national film industry was at times characterised by some as being a complete waste of money with regard to production (Rossi 1960: 82–83) and frequently stigmatised as being a form of pure 'dependency' that did nothing to foster the industry. The launch of the system triggered a blooming into existence of production companies that sought to utilise State subsidies. However, most of these made only one or two films and ultimately did not foster the development

of a substantive industry. During 1946 sixty-five Italian films were made by forty-eight different production companies, only eight of which made more than one movie. During 1947 forty-six films were made by forty-seven production companies and during 1948 the film number was still low (forty-nine) and only three production companies made more than one film (Pellizzari 1986: 242–244)³⁵.

Under the State funding regime established by Andreotti's law (1947, n. 379), films could only qualify 'for a contribution equal to the 10 per cent of the gross revenue from public showings, in the four years following their national premieres', if their scripts had been preapproved by the Cinema Bureau (Vitti 1996: 98). This system—which is also analysed by Bizzarri and Solaroli (1958: 46)—has been deemed a *de facto* restoration of State policy under the Fascists implemented in 1923 (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1529). The policy was 'an incentive to make films that attracted the domestic public' (Wagstaff 1998: 75). When passed into the law, the 1947 measure had the effect of reinforcing the Government's existing powers of censorship in the process of assessing new Italian films and guiding the domestic production to accord with precise ideological objectives (Farassino 1989).

This form of 'preventative censorship', introduced in 1947 and exercised by the Commission for Cinematographic Revision at the Office of Cinematography, did not change when the new cinema law (n. 958) was approved two years later (22 December 1949). This precautionary form of censorship was certainly more powerful than Article 21 of the Italian Constitution (introduced in 1948), which prohibited shows against the *buon costume* (common decency), in order to set standards of acceptable moral behaviours. The 1947 measure, in fact, remained the same throughout all the 1950s and, only softened by the new legislation approved in 1962, is defined by Vittorio Caldiron (1961: 1517) as 'an impenetrable blockage, a crushing bottleneck [. . .] for our cinema.' The Commission for Cinematographic Revision had the power to exclude certain films from being screened; it could determine the nationality of the films, as well as being able to award the 8% artistic quality bonus (Brunetta 1982: 55). In his volume on the Italian film industry Quaglietti (1980: 84) explains how State funding was available for everybody and that it was denied in very few cases—even if Andreotti Stated in Parliament that the novelty of the new law was the possibility of raising the quality of the national production by refusing to give the 8% bonus based on artistic quality³⁶. This can be argued as further evidence of how mass film production complied with the guidelines that the Government set out for it. If a screenplay was not approved, the finished film would not be given the permission to be screened: this was a means by which the Government sought to determine the character of film directors' artistic output (Brunetta 1991: 14–15). This aspect of the law was strongly criticised both by Italian exhibitors and by the opposition MPs. The former did not approve of a system in which State funding was partly



Figure 3.2 Italian film director Pietro Germi, courtesy Corbis.

determined by a bureaucratic committee and not by the audience; while the latter were of the view that too much power was being placed in the hands of the 'public officials', a development that might jeopardise the freedom of the film industry³⁷. The case of Pietro Germi's film *Il cammino della speranza* (The Road to Hope) (1950), which was denied the State contribution by the Technical Commission because it contained some scenes that were considered to be too offensive, can be seen—as Quaglietti (1980: 81) chooses to—as a significant example, because for the first time as well as censorship, the Government also used the weapon of refusing to subsidise, or of doing so to a lesser degree.

This was considered by Chiarini (1954: 57) even more surprising, if one compares this film with the ones which actually received the further 8% for special artistic qualities: *Attanasio cavallo vanesio* (1950) and *Bellezze in motoscooter* (1950). Two years earlier, Germi's *Gioventù perduta* (Lost Youth) (1948) was temporarily opposed by the Commission because it presented a pessimistic portrayal of post-war Italian youngsters and then was cut in order to be screened in public cinemas (Cesari 1982: 85; Argentieri and Cipriani 1957: 1341). Mario Mattoli's comedy *Adamo ed Eva* (Adam and Eve) (1950) was blocked by the Commission because 'the Bishop of Bergamo had protested about certain jokes which to his way of thinking were irreverent towards religion' (Quaglietti 1980: 79)³⁸. It is important here to remember that this case was quite atypical, not because the State was supporting the entire national production, but because of the way producers operated. If one only looks at the evidence—for example, of 1951–1952—then the results are 'of spectacular and long length films, 5% were excluded from obligatory projection, 15% obtained only a 10% contribution and 80% obtained the higher contribution of 18%' (*L'Attività dell'ANICA 1951–1952*: 39).

In comparison, in 1950 only one film was excluded by the Government financial support, nineteen received the 10% agreed and sixty-nine the 18%; in 1953 the films excluded were six, those granted the 10% were thirty-seven and those granted the 18% were eighty. In four years (1950–1954), out of 425 films produced, 299 were considered excellent for their artistic qualities, 108 good enough to receive the 10% and only 18 'indigestible even with a cast-iron stomach' (Chiarini 1954: 52–54). However, this should not be read in such a way that all the films made by Italian producers were supported by the Government, but that—as Andreotti himself states in his interview with Farassino (1989)—those producers seeking the approval of the Via Veneto office would discuss their scripts beforehand, in order to avoid useless waste of money (Rossi 1960: 116).

The Governmental form of censorship also needed to take into account—as it did for the case of *Adamo ed Eva* (Adam and Eve) (1950) and of many others—the opinion of the Catholic establishment. Religion was certainly one of the topics which Argentieri and Cipriani (1957: 1343–1345) identify as forbidden on the screen or acceptable only if portrayed with great care

and supported by Article 21 of the Constitution, which would forbid 'spectacles contrary to good taste' (Barile 1961: 1492). According to Argentieri and Cipriani (1961: 1535) the taboos, or rather the topics which filmmakers could not address, began to become extremely precise. Films which offered a realistic portrayal of Italian society, and in particular of the less-well-off classes, were not welcome; priests and policemen could not be depicted unless their representation exalted their role; any film about the war was rejected and particular obstacles were put in the way of films about the war of liberation or the partisan struggle.

According to Argentieri and Cipriani (1961: 1535), therefore, this censorship which protected the 'good taste' only seemed to operate in a 'political way': politics is the main concern, politics are its 'morals', and politics are its objectives. However, the State censorship was also echoed by a Catholic Church censorship that was implemented by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, whose members were also part of the 'State board of censors, thus bringing about an interlocking of State and private Catholic interests' (Forgacs 1990: 121; see also Caldirola 1961: 1513–1514). It was not a surprise that already in 1946, in an article titled "Il problema morale del cinema e lo Stato" published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, the official cinema magazine of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, Msgr. Luigi Civardi clearly explained the role of the State in relation to the film industry: 'The State has two duties in terms of cinema: to prevent it from doing evil and to ensure that it does good. In other words it was to forbid immoral cinema and to promote moral and moralizing cinema'. It will be important to analyse specifically what the meaning of moral was for Msgr. Civardi, especially when the intervention by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in terms of censorship seemed much more focused on those issues of good taste interpreted by Roberto Rossellini (1961) as regarding 'only sexual material and obscene acts' (quoted in Sanguineti, ed., 1999: 45). These aspects of good taste more strictly related to obscenity and sexuality will be analysed in details within the role of Catholic censorship in Chapters 4 and 6.

THE IMPACT OF ANDREOTTI'S 1949 LAW ON FILM NATIONALITY, FILM PRODUCTION AND THE ROLE OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN CO-PRODUCTIONS

At the end of the war, the Italian film production industry was shattered. The studios were inactive, Cinecittà had been transformed into a refugee camp and all its equipment had been destroyed. The centralisation of power carried out by the Government by the creation of the Office for the Cinematography in 1947 imposed rigid control over national production, funding and censorship. As a result, from a quantitative perspective, there was an overall marked rise in the number of national films produced between 1945 and 1955. It was an accepted truism that this was not paralleled by an improvement in the

quality of those films; Brunetta (1982: 11–13) concludes that the quality was decreasing and that Italian audiences were given a production, which became an alternative to Neorealism, the message of which was considered by the Government to be too dangerous at the time³⁹. Spinazzola (1985: 7) terms the domestic production of this era as having been predominantly ‘films for the people’, in contrast with the ‘films about the people’, which by 1950–1951 had disappeared from the list of top ten revenue-earning films. Emanuela Martini (1986: 103) States that this ‘homogenization towards the lower end of the spectrum of Italian cinema’ derived from a clear strategic policy that sought to encourage a particular type of film production, while hindering another. As Wagstaff (1998: 75–76) affirms, the notion of quality shifted from having an artistic connotation, to being defined in terms of production values, international stars, exotic locations and spectacle.

As a result, Neorealism was edged out of the mainstream by different variations of popular cinema, ones that overall had a strong link with the Catholic tradition:

Intimately Catholic, sustained by a strong sense of sin and the conviction of the inescapable fragility of human nature, popular Italian film sought to possess an explicit edifying value—thus differing from the more remote and complex morality of the neorealists also in this respect. (Spinazzola 1985: 62)

This edifying vision of the domestic cinema production was one that the Vatican sought to promote and one that Andreotti and the Christian Democrats sought to achieve by using finance as a means of trying to foster a particular type of industry, one that would abandon experimental forms and that would adopt safer, more conservative styles that were in line with the Catholic ideology. It needed to be a cinema emptied of ‘every polemical and critical virus’ (Chiarini 1954: 47). This vision was openly articulated by Andreotti in a Statement that he made to the Senate, during its deliberations of his proposed cinema law: ‘I believe that in this field, like in all fields, the best way to defend ourselves from a negative influence is to produce many reels which have a positive content, because, sincerely, I do not believe too much in censorship’⁴⁰. It is fairly clear from his cinema policy that Andreotti did believe in censorship but in what was defined in the previous part as ‘preventative censorship’, which his office managed to apply with great determination and success.

However, as well as defining the procedures for State funding and censorship, confirming the compulsory screening of Italian films, Andreotti’s law also raised the issue of film nationality by assigning it to the Commission as one of its duties⁴¹. This arrangement was presented as a means of protecting the domestic production and increasing the number of Italian films that were made. However, as Wagstaff (1998: 75–76) observes:

For a film to be admitted to screen quotas and to receive State credit and tax rebates, it had only to dress itself up as Italian, even if the money used to produce it came from American profit (blocked in Italy by currency exchange restrictions) earned by Hollywood films distributed in Italy.

This obviously raises the issue of co-productions. Lev (1993: 19–20) defines a co-production as a ‘collaboration between producing companies from two or more nations, under terms defined by formal agreements between the countries involved’. However, in Italy, under the regulatory regime created by Andreotti’s law, when there was a collaboration between an American and a European company, a formal agreement was not stipulated and the crucial point of ‘bilateral production agreements’ did not exist (Bizzarri and Solaroli 1958: 108). Therefore, the collaboration could not be termed a co-production. American companies sought to benefit ‘from the double or triple subsidies of European co-productions, either by working through a European subsidiary or by investing in a film produced by European companies’ (Lev 1993: 19–20, 23). Moreover, as Lev (1993: 22) States, as the European market had become more important to the major American production companies, in the wake of the United States Supreme Court’s Paramount Decree previously mentioned, to attract larger audiences, it became financially more alluring for them to make films that appealed to European audiences, ones that used European stars and that were released with locally targeted publicity⁴². That is why many of the 1950s and 1960s American movies starred European actors and especially actresses, such as Brigitte Bardot, Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Anna Magnani, and Jeanne Moreau. This was certainly the case in Italy, where the presence of Americans in the film industry was felt even more strongly in the so-called ‘productions on behalf of’ (Bizzarri 1987: 32–33), where Italians become producers in the name of the American companies and make films which are on paper Italian but *de facto* American. The ‘productions on behalf of’ provided an opportunity to the Americans for investing the ‘frozen money’ that they could not transfer to the United States (Rossi 1960: 89)⁴³. However, this had the effect of creating further difficulties for Italian national production. American major production companies were able to pass off their films as co-productions and employ Italian producers as fronts for their own interests (Bizzarri 1987: 33). Additionally, by passing off American films as Italian, the compulsory screening of national films would be affected as well and many American productions would be screened as ‘national Italian’ products (Rossi 1960: 121)⁴⁴. Therefore, in both ways, American film producers could benefit from this working relationship with Italian companies and were able to utilise both their earnings and Italian film legislation for their own interests.

THE LAW OUTSIDE THE LAW: THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN AGREEMENTS

The decision of the Italian Government not to establish a legislative regime that provided the domestic film industry with a measure of protection meant that the American industry—subject to the issue of ‘frozen capital’—achieved freedom of action in what was to become its principal export market. The one matter on which the Hollywood production companies did not have the scope was that of frozen capital. Despite the high levels of profit that were to be generated in Italy, the major American companies theoretically could not transfer these earnings to the United States. Paradoxically, this was to help effect the American film industry’s domination of its Italian counterpart.

While through the dubbing law American production companies could already get back some of their profits, there were other ways from which the Italian Government seemed to allow U.S. film to benefit. As Rossi (1960: 67) States, ‘other funds were distributed using “special accounts”, in which the blocked funds of American producers were registered, who—according to our (Italian) law—could not export more than 15% of the proceeds obtained from their films in Italy’. This law was not always strictly enforced: the Ministry for Foreign Trade would look at every single case in order to issue a special permit for money to be exported to America and there were several instances in which the unblocking of frozen money was authorised. Members of Parliament raised their concern about this arbitrariness but nothing was done to formulate specific rules to govern the matter.

If such authorisation was not forthcoming, the American companies then had to find means of re-investing their money in Italy. Options that were exercised in this respect included: participating in productions and co-productions with Italian companies, purchasing cinemas and acquiring distribution businesses (Brunetta 1979: 67–68). Sometimes, they used religious institutes and charities as means of channelling funds to the United States, as in the case of the North American College (Quaglietti 1980: 98–99).

After a series of visits from representatives in Europe of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), clarification of the film industry relationship between the two countries was felt to be necessary. As result, in April 1951 a group of representatives from the central trade association for the Italian industry travelled to New York in order to hold discussions with American producers. The trip was described by the *Bollettino di informazioni* as a means of trying to regulate the financial problems that the American majors had in Italy and to establish a better relationship between the two nations’ film industries⁴⁵. The importance of the agreement was reflected by the warm welcome the Italian delegation received at Radio City Music Hall in New York⁴⁶. Bizzarri and Solaroli (1958) conducted the first academic analysis of the agreement. They published the text of the documents in their volume on cinema industry. Subsequently, Quaglietti (1980) added some more elements

to the story. However, his focus of study is different from theirs. Bizzarri and Solaroli include the agreement as part of a contemporary study of the Italian film industry, with special attention to its relationship to legislation and the role of the State; whereas, Quaglietti tries to write a history of national film industry from the 1930s to the 1970s.

What has gone unstressed in the literature is how the agreement affected the development of Italian cinema, providing as it did, conditions in which American production companies developed production capacity in Italy with the help of the Italian Government.

The Italian representatives who went to New York on 23 March 1951 were Eitel Monaco, the president of the ANICA; Renato Gualino, the president of the National Films Producers' Union; Franco Penotti, the president of the National Film Distributors' Union; and Italo Germini, the president of AGIS. The party did not include any representatives of the Italian Government. This is of particular significance as some of the issues discussed were to be enacted in legislation, legislation that would in some cases even limit the freedom of Parliament to renew specific laws (Brunetta 1982: 16)⁴⁷. The delegation's members did not inform Parliament about their trip and in the parliamentary debates of the years that followed there was never any mention of the agreement.

While theoretically the agreement 'created Italian Film Export (IFE) for the purpose of promoting and distributing Italian pictures in the United States', in practice the outcome of the meetings was strongly in favour of the American film industry (Guback 1969: 13). American companies could transfer 50% of their income, while the MPAA would give 12.50% of the above income to an Italian company in order to promote Italian films in America; 40% of income from U.S. companies would be reinvested in Italian film production, with the remaining 60% spent on various investments in Italy, while U.S. companies would limit their presence in Italy to only 225 films per year (Quaglietti 1980: 101–102).

The result of these agreements would be very clear in a few years. The IFE would distribute a minimum number of Italian films abroad, what would be a small fraction of the number of Hollywood films that were flooding Italy. Guback (1969: 80) remembers that while IFE 'did make an effort to penetrate the market, it was never particularly successful in generating big box office hits for Italian films'. On the contrary, what was defined as auto-application of quotas of American films in Italy did not prove to be a means of self-regulation for the cinematic deluge. By the beginning of the 1950s, the American film industry had exhausted its warehoused stock of films that had not been previously released in Italy, so the number of 220 agreed to in New York was more than enough for their production. Moreover, as Paolo Bafle (1986: 81) pronounces in his essay on U.S. 'film dumping' in Italy, the acceptance of the auto-application of quotas by the Americans represented a shrewd policy on their part rather than a bowing before Italian strength.

The volume of American films allowed into the country meant that the Italian exhibitors not only had a steady supply product to mount but also had the use of new technology very much appreciated by Italians, and supported by American production companies, which would provide the exhibitors, free of charge, the first lenses needed to show a film in CinemaScope, of which they had the exclusive right (Bafle 1986: 77)⁴⁸.

In an article published in August 1951 in *Bollettino di informazioni*, the necessity to open the doors even more to American cinema was clearly Stated. It affirmed that the number of cinemas in Italy had increased from 4,000 to 12,000 and that Italy was the American film industry's second most important market after the United States itself⁴⁹. Moreover, the New York agreement gave total freedom not only to American films to circulate in Italy but also to what Quaglietti (1980: 103) defines as the direct injection for American capital in Italian production. In this way, the American film industry came to control its Italian counterpart in terms of both production and distribution.

The ANICA-MPEA agreement was renewed on 2 April 1953 and a new agreement was signed on 30 June 1954, in which the Italian representatives committed themselves to not raise the amount to be spent on dubbed films, while the percentage invested in the IFE was to be decreased gradually until eventually it would cease. However, Eitel Monaco, president of ANICA, felt extremely pleased with the results of the agreement and expressed his satisfaction during a press conference that was held in New York on 27 September 1954. He Stated that between 1950 and 1954 the number of Italian films that had been made annually had increased from 60 to 140, with an accompanying quadrupling of profit that had been generated from the Italian domestic market (a rise from US\$15 million to US\$60 million). Monaco also affirmed that American companies in Italy distributed fewer films (220 rather than 280) and had increased their net profit from US\$10 million to US\$15 million.

According to the president of ANICA Monaco, the reasons for what he defined a satisfactory result for both the American and Italian film industries were to be located mainly within the sound political strategy of the ANICA, according to which support to the industry is given not through restrictions or taxation on foreign films, but through financial incentives for the national industry. In fact, Monaco Stated, 'today Italy is the only great producing country which accepts practically unlimited importation of American films'⁵⁰. These words, however, confirm the freedom of action that American films had established in the Italian market and the difficulty, not mentioned here by Monaco, that Italian national film would face in trying to compete with foreign competition.

The agreement was renewed on 9 August 1956, although this was preceded by short disagreement that was sparked off when the Italian Government tried to increase the tax on dubbing. However, the move was firmly vetoed by Washington⁵¹. The Italian producers tried to resurrect the

suggestion made that there should be an increase in the compulsory screening of national films. This was quashed by the Italian exhibitors, who again accused the producers of making low-quality films, and ironically suggested, together with a compulsory screening, the need for a compulsory attendance from the spectators⁵². The agreements renewed in 1956 brought about very few changes from the previous ones and were approved again on 9 January 1959.

Paolo Bafile (1986: 74) sums up the general attitude of the Italian Government towards the national film industry and clarifies the importance of the American presence:

This almost absolute domination by the American production companies was brought about in Italy (as indeed, in other countries) through a commercial politics—sportingly termed—so efficient and shrewd that it aimed towards, more than immediate profit, the attainment of a ‘dominant’ position in the market, that had a long term, if not indeed permanent, character. In this period the ‘politics’ of the large American Companies in our (Italian) market is perhaps the only phenomenon it is worth studying, given the ‘politics’ of the industrial categories of Italian cinema (production and distribution) were to *not have any politics*. Against the powerful and extremely efficient Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) our cinema did not set up anything similar or comparable, but only discord, disorganization, conflicting interests (the obvious example of producers and distributors suffices), rivalry (between producers themselves) and so forth.

This concept of ‘not having any politics’ could not be applied to the Christian Democrat Government of the day. Andreotti promoted his overall strategic film industry policy through the use of ‘delay’. He was tardy in laying proposed legislation before Parliament. When he did finally do so the process of deliberation and approval proved protracted. This use of inertia with regard to the industry allowed the Christian Democrats to build a strong coalescence of interests with all of the industry’s constituent parts—the producers, the distributors and the exhibitors. At the same time, this exercise of purposeful lethargy, with regard to Italian film legislation, enabled the Christian Democrats to satisfy many of the interests of American film production companies, while also reflecting the cultural strategy promoted by the Vatican.

4 Endemic Propaganda

Catholic Production, Exhibition and Criticism

Critics have often questioned the existence of a Catholic cinema in post-war Italy since the end of the Fifties and its relevance within the Italian film industry. This chapter will investigate both production companies directly funded by the Vatican and those supported by it indirectly. Moreover, it will look at the role of the parish cinemas, which during the period 1945–1960 represented a third of the national exhibition in terms of seats. By analysing the choice of films shown, we can explore the part played by the Vatican in the distribution of American and Italian films. We can then comprehend the use of American cinema to spread moral values and to promote anti-Communist positions. Finally, the role of the Italian Catholic press with regards to American films is also significant, as it illuminates the nature of the relationship between the Catholics and American cinema.

EXCHANGING FAVOURS: AMERICA, THE VATICAN AND FILM PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The influential role of the Catholic Church in Italian society, already analysed in Chapter 2 in relation to its cultural propaganda, can be witnessed in the complex connection between the Church and post-war Italian cinema. The Catholic presence in Italian society was composed of organisations that, according to Pius XII, had to be strictly controlled by the church hierarchy, as ‘the Catholics were an army to be disciplined and directed into every corner of Italian society’¹. Therefore, there were links between the Vatican and the diverse forms of Catholic associations that were to be found across Italy. The *Azione Cattolica Italiana*, for instance, whose members increased from 1,772,265 in 1946 to 2,784,734 in 1959, organised different religious and social activities, such as summer camps, sporting events and prayer events, with a particular attention being given towards protecting the role of the family and promoting a form of public morality². Other examples of the widespread form of the Catholic association are the Catholic Association of Italian workers (Acli), which brought together

Catholic workers from both the industry and the agricultural sector; the Coldiretti, which by 1956 represented over 1,600,000 families of peasant proprietors; and Comunione e liberazione (CL), an association born in 1950s, which over the years has achieved a very prominent role in Italian society. These organisations, together with many other smaller Catholic groups, extended over large ranges of national cultural, economic and social life in Italy, covering areas as diverse as education, charity, women's movements and the media.

Catholic intervention in the film industry was not unparalleled. The Italian Communist Party was the first political party in Italy to set up a film division, with the aim of making documentaries, appointing film critics, setting up cineclub movements and running a film production and distribution company. However, the Vatican had understood well the importance of the cinematic medium much earlier; as early as 1904 a Milanese priest had written to the Archbishop Andrea Carlo Ferrari to inform him of the influential role cinema would have on Milanese youth (Busti 2003: 15).

It was only though in the immediate period after the Second World War that the Catholic Church became totally involved in the film industry, mirroring, if not excelling at, what the Communist Party had tried to do in order to gain control of the cinematic world. It was during this time that the Venice Film Festival and the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (the leading Italian institution for the education and research in cinema, founded in 1935) were in decidedly Catholic hands, as were the producers' and distributors' associations³.

In an article published in 1954 in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (the official Catholic film journal published by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico), the Belgian Jesuit Félix A. Morlion clarified the Catholic awareness of the power of cinema and its obligation to fight against Communists in the film industry. Morlion was heavily involved in Italian cinema in the post-war period. He contributed to the creation of the Cineforum (see the next section titled American Cinema and Catholic Press) and collaborated with film directors, such as Roberto Rossellini. His article (RC 1954: 5) not only listed all the Communist cinema initiatives—such as the creation of the 'cinebrigade di informazione' (Information Cine-Brigades), information groups which had the responsibility for strengthening the party by distributing audiovisual propaganda documents in large and small centres, but also highlighted the dissemination of those Christian values through the medium of cinema. As he stated, 'Christians have become aware of the exceptional psychological power of film in attracting the masses' (Morlion 1954: 7)⁴. The significance of the Vatican presence in the industry is unmistakable in *La Chiesa e il cinema* (1961), a volume published by the Catholic organisation Ente dello Spettacolo, and written by Msgr. Salvatore Canals, eminent representative of the ecclesiastic world. Msgr. Canals gives a distinct picture of what the Catholic Church was expected to do in the film industry:

[. . .] The Church has set out the principles and guidance for an ecclesiastic organization in the cinematographic sector: the organization goes from the creation of a technical and administrative organ of the Holy See for the study of the problems of audio-visual technologies pertinent to faith and morality (the Papal Commission for Cinematography, Radio and Television), to the promotion undertaken by the Episcopate, of the National Catholic Cinematographic Centres, and to the organisation—under the control of the aforementioned Centres—of cinematic theatres run by the Ecclesiastical Authorities which may offer the faithful, in particular young people, healthy and educational entertainment in safe environment (Canals 1961: 33).

Canals' words reflect precisely what Pius XI had requested in his *Vigilanti Cura* (1936: 7): a carefully organised structure that was able to impose a strict guidance over the film industry. This needed to be achieved by not only controlling the distribution of good-quality films in parish cinemas, but also directing the production industry towards films which would reflect Catholic principles, given the high number of parish cinemas available. Distribution and production were, therefore, carefully monitored by the Vatican through a scrupulously planned network that had contacts in every area of the film industry.

Catholic Production

The ambitious plan of gaining control over the film industry, however, did not seem to succeed as well as had been hoped when one concentrates on what was often defined as Catholic production. The case for Catholic intervention in film production had already been put forward, in 1941, in a collection of essays published by the Catholic AVE titled *Il volto del cinema*, which was the result of a series of debates on the need for moral film production.

In order to understand fully the Vatican's attempt to become involved in production, the negative judgements by the Catholic establishment of a high percentage of post-war films have to be considered. In his volume *La Chiesa e il cinema*, Msgr. Galletto (1955: 15–16) defined post-war production as commercial films where sex and violence replaced morality and respect for God. This strong denunciation of the post-war national film industry would not only allow a better understanding of the concerns of the Vatican over the morality of the cinema, but also explains the consequent interest in the possibility of intervening in production itself. In a document found at the Archive of the Catholic Exhibitors Association, the Società Salesiana had already made a strong denunciation of the current situation:

So, must we close our cinemas? No, then we must boycott every film which people like and which teaches sin, which glorifies vice, which does not respect God and his commandments, which mixes seductive

behaviour and the lives of the saints, which teaches one to steal, to kill, to carry out all sorts of violence, to flirt, to desecrate family intimacy, to treat life as a gallant adventure and so on and so forth, which is what 90 per cent of films do⁵.

If 90% of production is considered immoral and unsuitable for screening in parish cinemas, the pressure from the Vatican to intervene in the creation of a proper Catholic production is perfectly understandable. The Catholic commitment to a production which could reflect Christian values is expressed through the foundation of Catholic production companies, such as Orbis, Universalialia and Film Costellazione, and the attempt to prompt Catholic scriptwriters to produce worthwhile material to be screened⁶. This intervention was defined as 'limited', leaving commentators to draw the conclusion that a Catholic cinema as such did not really exist (Gori 1981: 13, 15; Chiarini 1954: 39). However, it was so widely discussed in 1940s and 1950s on the pages of the Catholic press that *La Rivista del Cinematografo* received a wide selection of what were defined as Catholic scripts as a consequence of the animated debate. In 2001, the Jesuit Nazareno Taddei, speaking at a conference called *Benedetta celluloid!*, on the role of Catholic cinema, reminded the audience of how in the immediate post-war period he had often opposed the idea of creating a Catholic production. For him it would have to compete with other forms of cinemas, especially the American one, which due to the need for global distribution, 'never dealt with real fundamental religious, Christian and Catholic issues'. Taddei believed that the problem of morality in cinema could be better addressed by educating Catholic audiences rather than by operating on the production, which was very different from what the Vatican and the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had tried to achieve in the post-war period. The attempts made to create a Catholic production are, in fact, still worth mentioning as they help to build a broader view of the Vatican intervention in the film industry.

The production company Orbis was set up in 1945 by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and it represents a concrete attempt on the part of the Vatican to intervene in film production. It made films such as Vittorio De Sica's *La porta del cielo* (The Gate of Heaven) (1944), Pietro Germi's *Il testimone* (The Testimony) (1945), Alessandro Blasetti's *Un giorno nella vita* (1946) praised by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* as an extraordinary portrayal of monastic life ("P.S.", RC 1946: 13), and Romolo Marcellini's *Guerra alla guerra* (1946) which was a celebration of peace against the cruelty of war (Vasile, RC 1947: 8–9). There were also thirty short films which were intended to be made for Catholic schools around the world, some of which unfortunately were not completed. Amongst these, the short film *Chi è Dio?* (Who Is God?), which represented the example to be followed, was written by the Catholic playwright Diego Fabbri, and the Communist Cesare Zavattini, directed by the 'mangiapreti' (priest-eater)

Mario Soldati (*Benedetta celluloidi!* 2002: 69) and awarded il Primo Premio del Festival di Salerno.

Only a year after the creation of Orbis, a group of Catholics headed by the Sicilian architect Salvo D'Angelo founded Universalialia, which produced Mario Soldati's *Daniele Cortis* (1947), Alessandro Blasetti's *Fabiola* (1948) (see Figure 4.1), which had an extraordinary box office intake of £572 million, and *Prima comunione* (Father's Dilemma) (1950), and Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles) (1948)⁷.

Despite his strong affiliations with the Vatican (his company was based in Castel Sant'Angelo and the artistic director was Dalla Torre, also editor of the official Catholic newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*) Salvo D'Angelo was defined as a rebel against the strict rules imposed by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (*Benedetta celluloidi!* 2002: 113), mainly because of the type of films he produced in the four years (1946–1950) of the life of Universalialia. It is difficult, in fact, to define some of these films as Catholic: some of them were either not classified positively by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico or had political implications not favoured by the Vatican. Amongst the films not praised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (and classified only for adults) were Mario Soldati's *Daniele Cortis* (1947), Riccardo Freda's *Guarany* (1948), Paolo Moffa's *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (The Last Days of Pompeii) (1950) and Blasetti's *Fabiola* (1948), some scenes of which were defined by Msgr. Albino Galletto (RC 1949: 6), President of the Catholic Censorship Association (Presidente della Commissione di Revisione), as 'morally unacceptable' because of some revealing and inappropriate scenes. Visconti's *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles)



Figure 4.1 Michèle Morgan meets director Alessandro Blasetti and producer Salvo D'Angelo in Rome for the making of *Fabiola*, courtesy Cinit-Cineforum Italiano.

(1948), despite being praised for its artistic qualities, was classified again only for adults, mainly for its political affiliation with the Communists and for its compromise between Catholic and Communist funds. However, it is worth remembering here that the films produced by Orbis and Universalis were also the first films in the distribution list of Columbia or Warner Bros., which apparently, in order to please the Vatican, were quite happy to distribute the Catholic produced films in America (Quaglietti 1991: 71).

Apart from these two companies, expressly Catholic-motivated film production was limited to the works of smaller Catholic groups and the commercial producers' involvement in educational films. In the first regional conference of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association (ACEC) in Milan, Titanus is thanked for its efforts in the area of youth cinematography (1956: *Gli esercenti cattolici lombardi prendono coscienza della loro forza—Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore 18–20 giugno 1956*, p. 15, Archivio ACEC). Small production companies such as Film Costellazione, which was started with the help of Azione Cattolica Italiana and funds from the Americans (Mereghetti 2003: 33), San Paolo Film and Golden Star either had a short life or did not make much of a contribution to Catholic production. Moreover, some of the so-called 'Catholic' production companies did not entirely correspond to that Christian feeling which was needed to be defined as such (Ciaccio 1962: 135). It was, in fact, often emphasised by Catholic commentators that it was not enough to present biblical themes or general religious issues to classify a film as Catholic. The Catholic playwright and screenwriter Diego Fabbri (RC 1946: 2) himself referred to 'spiritual cinema' as a 'generous all-inclusive label'. According to Fabbri, this kind of cinema should embrace a deep spiritual awareness together with an artistic creativity which would be able to express that universality which signifies compassion, concreteness, exemplariness, popularity. This is what three years earlier Remo Branca (RC 1943: 3) had probably referred to when discussing the development of a Catholic cinema: not just a religious or hagiographic cinema, but a cinema which deals with every subject taking its inspiration from the principles of Catholic morality. These elements often seemed to be absent in the Catholic production analysed above.

However, what was widely regarded as the first attempt to create a proper Catholic film came in 1942 through the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and the Azione Cattolica Italiana with *Pastor Angelicus*, a documentary on the life of Pius XII, which was defined by Luigi Gedda (President of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico) as the first real significant Catholic commitment in the film industry and by Msgr. Civardi for its spiritual message as a means of Catholic propaganda (RC 1943: 27). The film was judged by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico as superior for its artistic qualities and for its educational and spiritual aims (*Segnalazioni cinematografiche* XII, Jan. 1943) and generally acclaimed by film critics both in Italy and abroad⁸. In America a documentary from the series *March of Time* produced by Paramount had already been dedicated to the life of Pius

XII and had attracted so much attention that the magazine *Life* had dedicated a special illustrated section to presenting the film. It seemed therefore obvious that Catholics all over the world would appreciate the production of *Pastor Angelicus*. The film not only had a very strong support in the distribution process by being imposed on all the parish and commercial cinemas but also was accompanied by a letter written by Armando Roncaglia (director of the State distribution company Enic created in 1935) and by Gedda himself, which prevented the screening of the film together with any other film, as it needed to be shown in the right spiritual atmosphere. It is also worth bearing in mind what Carlo Falconi, in his book on the Church and on Catholic organisations, writes about the political aim of *Pastor Angelicus*, when in 1948 Southern Italy was cured by the Communist germ thanks to several projections of *Pastor Angelicus*, even in villages where films had never been shown before (Falconi 1956: 268). This Statement not only stresses the control the Church could exert over the film medium but also elicits the Vatican's post-war appreciation of the potential of cinema for mass manipulation.

Catholic Distribution and Exhibition

Despite various attempts to provide a production, which could fight against the immorality of commercial cinema, the Catholics had another idea in mind. Bonetti (1962: 77) had already assessed it in the early 1960s. This was the idea of exerting a positive influence over film producers by creating a market where the product could be distributed.

It came to be perceived as critical to develop an extensive network of parish cinemas that provided a market that could prove the difference between success and failure for producers whom the Church regarded as sympathetic. While from a religious point of view, they represented a means of spreading the evangelical message as 'parish cinemas [. . .] can beat Church pulpits for evangelical vigour' (*Sala cinematografica impegno pastorale* 1966: 6; Baragli, *La civiltà cattolica* 1956: 35), from a purely commercial perspective, they appeared to be the only effective means of influencing production. This distribution system, with its vast network of parish cinemas, provided the Vatican with a means of exerting pressure on the Italian film production industry. The number of parish cinemas rose from 450 in 1938 to around 7,000 in 1953, which meant more than a million seats, when the total number of cinemas (commercial and parish ones) was 17,000 and the total number of seats over five million⁹. The figures are even more significant when one bears in mind the fact that in some cases, especially in small villages where commercial cinemas were not available, parish cinemas could act as pioneer, 'preceding industrial initiatives'¹⁰.

How was this growth achieved? The Vatican played a part in the development of the parish cinemas. However, the Italian Government with the law 29-12-1949, n. 958 also helped in the construction or reconstruction

of churches, which often had a cinema attached to them. Despite no distinction being made between commercial and parish cinemas, in the immediate post-war period priority was given to primary-need buildings, a category which commercial cinemas could certainly not be defined as belonging to. Parish cinemas, on the other hand, belonged automatically to the churches to which they were attached and their construction was easier to be authorised (Quaglietti 1981: 43–44). Moreover the law 29–12–1949, n. 958 did not allow new cinemas to be built without a ministerial authorisation, which included a fixed ratio of seats for number of people in each village or town (one seat for every twenty to thirty people). This regulation would still not distinguish clearly parish cinemas from commercial cinemas. The Exhibitors Association AGIS felt the need to request such a distinction, as they accused parish cinemas of simulating a religious intent in order to obtain a licence, while acting as proper commercial cinemas (“Vecchi e nuovi problemi dell’esercizio”, *BI* 15–31/1/1950: 1).

Msgr. Albino Galletto (RC 1950: 3) had tried to justify the presence of non-religious people in the management of many parish cinemas (at least the ones in bigger towns and cities and therefore more appealing from a financial point of view) as a way of avoiding financial debts in the face of a lack of morally acceptable films. In fact often the non-religious person in charge of a parish cinema, mainly concerned with the financial implications, allowed films not appropriate to be shown, limiting himself to the occasional edit (and not always that) for the sake of appearances (*Sale cinematografiche cattoliche*—Archivio ACEC 1953: 102).

However, the result of the dispute over whether non-religious people should be responsible for parish cinemas was a ministerial circular (n. 9419/A.G. 37—23 May 1950) which was well received by the national exhibitors. The circular requested that it was the total responsibility of the priest to apply for permission and refused to give control of the parish cinema to a private organisation or people external to the parish. Also the circular limited the film publicity to the area of the church and the screening of films to festival days and three normal days per week, according to the approval of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico¹¹.

Moreover, on 11 April 1951 the Interior Ministry distributed a circular that clarified the role of the parish cinemas as places where the priest operates his religious activity, his educational and leisure purposes and that therefore the cinema represented one of the most appropriate places to achieve these spiritual aims¹². The criteria to allow the construction of parish cinemas were then established by a Consultative Commission of Cinematography at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which included Giulio Andreotti together with exhibitors, distributors, and film journalists (see Figure 4.2).

The clarification, however, if it was not beneficial for industrial cinemas, allowed parish cinemas to flourish. In fact, Msgr. Alfonso Bonetti (1962: 81), a key figure of the Catholic Exhibitors’ Association (ACEC),



Figure 4.2 The representatives of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association meet Giulio Andreotti, Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, courtesy Archivio ACEC.

compared the figures of the parish and commercial cinemas being built after these guidelines were released, admitting a substantial increase of parish cinemas.

Mgr. Francesco Dalla Zuanna, president of Catholic Exhibitors' Association (ACEC), in an article published by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* in 1956 titled "L'esercizio cattolico", admitted that the substantial increase of

Table 4.1 Number of Cinemas in Italy, 1950–1960

<i>Year</i>	<i>Commercial Cinemas</i>	<i>Parish Cinemas</i>
1950	671	596
1951	729	594
1952	553	555
1953	397	458
1954	654	539
1955	423	460
1956	398	235
1957	270	251
1958	186	133
1959	139	172
1960	339	191

parish cinemas was only possible thanks to the intervention of the Prime Minister. By defining the distinction between commercial and parish cinemas, he allowed the parish cinemas to have their own clearly defined characteristics and therefore build on their own strength.

Indeed, when analysing the strict criteria of the circular, it can easily be affirmed that the guidelines were very loose, because of the type of constraints they imposed. If one simply looks at the limitation of publicity to the area of the church, it is easy to understand that in many small towns and villages the churches were in central positions, which assisted the effectiveness of their advertising activities. Moreover, the criteria set by the Government were not often as strictly followed as one might have expected. In his book on the relationship between the Government and the cinema, Ernesto Rossi (1960: 124) states that parish cinemas were commercial businesses like every other cinema. They showed films of any kind, publicised their films in magazines and posters and were often run by non-religious managers; but they always obtained without any difficulty exhibitors' licences and they also managed to achieve reductions and tax discounts.

This denunciation seems to identify a coalescence of interests between the Government and the Vatican in an attempt to favour Catholic cinema. An article in *Paese Sera* (3 May 1952), defined by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* as a communist newspaper, strongly denounced the biased attitude of the Government in favouring parish cinemas by not forcing them to comply to the regulations imposed¹³. The breach of the rules denounced in the articles included the decision also to use some parish cinemas in Rome for shows by curtain raiser companies, as well as the number of seats per cinemas allowed, which was not supposed to exceed 600, and which in parish cinemas went over 1,600.

When it became apparent that the number of parish cinemas was increasing markedly, it was felt by the Vatican that they should operate within a structured framework. Therefore, on 18 May 1949, the Catholic Exhibitors' Association (ACEC) was founded. If for Busti (2003: 16) this association represented a means of co-ordinating an extant phenomenon, for Luigi Cipriani (1999: 5), then the president of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association, it meant an efficient answer to the need to operate at a national level in such a way as to spread widely an educational and moral message.

This widely diffused presence reflected the commitment the Catholic Church had expressed towards the cinema and its desire to exert influence over every aspect of the film industry. The establishment of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association also responded to a specific request Pius XI had already demanded in the *Vigilanti Cura* (29 June 1936) encyclical, which was made in order to guarantee, if not a presence in, at least an influence over the production and distribution systems. Through the organisation of the parish cinemas, which represented important customers for the film

industry, one request could be made: that the film industry itself would produce films in line with Catholic principles, which would allow them to be more easily shown in both parish and commercial cinemas.

The existence of an organised association of parish cinemas was not only of concern to the commercial exhibitors, who believed a further increase in number of parish cinemas would produce a definite harmful influence¹⁴. It also raised the prospect of such an organisation exerting pressure on the producers, who might then feel that they had to adapt their films in order to please parish cinemas (Rossi 1960: 127).

Catholic Censorship

The Government's role in relation to censorship has been discussed in Chapter 3. In order to evaluate the position of the State towards the film industry and the consequences for national production, it is important here to remember that often the censorship legislation was not considered to be sufficient by the Catholic establishment (Baragli, RC 1961: 115). It therefore needed to be complemented by the initiatives taken by the Vatican¹⁵. Whereas it is difficult to assess accurately what degree of influence the Vatican exerted over the production of films in the post-war period, it is certain that, as Giulio Andreotti admitted, the existence of thousands of parish cinemas certainly came to put pressure on distribution and therefore on production (Andreotti, RC 1956: 7). This degree of influence, if difficult to measure, was still under scrutiny by left-wing intellectuals, who compiled a special edition of Cinema Nuovo with the title of *La porpora e il nero. Con quali mezzi e in quale misura governo e chiesa controllano il cinema italiano? Una cronistoria degli ultimi due anni* (1961). The document is a captivating reconstruction of State and Church intervention in terms of censorship. It asks for a total abolition of censorship itself, in order to avoid the condemnation of films which had been classified by national and international critics as pure works of art. According to Mario Berutti (1961: 60), author of the article "I rapporti fra Stato e Chiesa", the problem was how the State could recognise the *de facto* supremacy of the Catholic Church and at the same time fulfil the Constitution's requirement of being independent and sovereign. This issue of the State's dependence on the Church needed, according to Berutti, to be resolved before any improvement could be seen in terms of censorship.

At this point an analysis of what types of films were shown in parish cinemas might help to identify some common principles. What made films acceptable or unacceptable and could this clarify the relationship between the Church, the State and commercial production? Amongst the guidelines given in the ministerial circular n. 9419/A.G. 37 (3 May 1950), there was the clear imposition that parish cinemas could show only films approved by the Vatican. However, things in reality were quite different. As films

shown in parish cinemas were generally three years old from their first run in public cinemas, the official criteria issued by the Censorship Commission of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had already established in 1934 a distinction between films allowed to be screened in parish cinemas and those permitted in public cinemas. Films belonging to the categories of For All and For All with Appropriate Changes, though, which officially were only considered suitable in a public venue, were still shown in parish cinemas. This was obviously a consequence of the very limited number of films considered to be appropriate for a screening in a parish cinema. However, allowing Films for All and Films for All with Appropriate Changes to be screened in parish cinema was still not enough. It was still considered to be a limitation and often perceived as a real difficulty, especially if one considers the numbers of films which each year fell into this category: for instance in 1953 the Films for All and Films for All with Appropriate Changes were 88, while the others (Adult, Adult with Appropriate Changes, Not Recommended and Excluded) were 398; the following year the first category had 59 films compared to 410 not suitable; in 1956 out of a total of 507 viewed by the Censorship Commission only 80 were classified in the For All and For All with Appropriate Changes categories (Quaglietti: 1981: 51). This was not an issue limited to the post-war period—it had already started much earlier. In the season 1936–1937, out of a total of 143 films examined in the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* only 14 were allowed to be screened in parish cinemas. This included three cartoons, four documentaries made by the Istituto Luce (a company founded in 1924 to produce and distribute Italian films), six American films and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936)¹⁶. In an article in *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, Ildo Avetta (1950: 14) compared the number of films allowed in parish cinemas in 1934 (24%) with those in 1949 (25%), underlining how the situation had not improved at all. The Archivie of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association (ACEC) contains numerous complaints with regard to the lack of morally acceptable films available for the screening. The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had published in 1943 an article in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* addressing cinema spectators directly and giving precise indications on how to behave in relation to films: by consulting the *Disco Rosso*, the publication where each film coming out would be classified by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's Censorship Committee, the spectator would be sure to comply with the directives of the Vatican in terms of what was allowed or not to be seen. The article is particularly significant because it explains the connotation of each category, from the O (for Oratori, Colleges and Schools), and P (for Parish Cinemas) groups, which despite being the most praised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico were unfortunately the lowest in numbers, to the Tutti (For All in public cinemas), which—despite its title—is recommended only for audiences accustomed to cinema, while the younger generation should still only consider the categories O and P. Amongst the least appreciated by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico,

the visibili per adulti (For Adults) is the widest category (which also presents the adulti con riserva [For Adults with Appropriate Changes] and the sconsigliati per tutti [Not Recommended], which refers to films totally forbidden if the spectator wants to be 'a good Christian')¹⁷. In fact, it was the spectator's responsibility to be informed on the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's classification in order not to commit an unacceptable mistake (Bongioanni 1962: 34). The categories were changed slightly when the differentiation between esclusi (Excluded) and sconsigliati (Not Recommended) was introduced in 1952 and the new classification was in place until 31 December 1968.

Despite the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's great care in establishing the categories and ensuring as far as possible that they would be spread across the Catholic community, the accusation that parish cinemas and spectators were not paying enough attention to the criteria imposed by the Government and the Vatican was not rare. In an article that was first published by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* and subsequently republished by the *Bollettino di informazioni* (the magazine of the Exhibitors Association), Msgr. Albino Galletto, the Ecclesiastical Consultant on the Entertainment Board, accused the parish cinemas of showing 'commercial films without worrying too much about their moral value'¹⁸. This was to compete with commercial cinema. Parish cinemas were obviously screening films other than those that had been endorsed by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. This difficult situation led to the creation of small commissions and sub-commissions, which could better control local parish cinema-related activities. From its headquarters in Turin, in 1953 the Opere Don Bosco set up a Diocesan Monitoring Commission which would look at the licences for the opening of new parish cinemas, as well steering priests towards what it regarded as the best choice of films to show¹⁹. In the Milanese area, the foundation of the Association of Parish Cinemas (ESCO) represented an attempt to concentrate everything that was central to the Ecclesiastical Authorities—the morality of the films shown in parish cinemas—into one single organisation (Viganò 1997: 87). However, the organisation was wound up in 1951. In 1952 it was succeeded by the Catholic Association for the Assistance of Cinema Exhibition (SCAEC), which established itself as the principal moral arbiter for the parish cinemas of Lombardy with regard to the films that they were considering screening. The Regional Entertainment Commission for Dioceses in Lombardy started to act as a censor for those films that the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had already categorised. Every film approved by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico as For All was re-screened at the regional level before being granted a final approval for local exhibition. Moreover a weekly bulletin was compiled by the Catholic Association for the Assistance of Cinema Exhibition that gave information about the films viewed, as well as a chart that gave detailed descriptions of individual films, provided comments on their moral content and indicated the necessary amendments²⁰. These new

criteria were officially accepted by Piedmont, Lazio, Liguria, Tuscany and Umbria and also used in Calabria, Campania and Sardinia. The decision in 1954 by the Emilia Romagna bishops to set up a Regional Office for Censorship was defended by the President of the Catholic Exhibitors' Association (ACEC) Msgr. Francesco Dalla Zuanna, who, in a letter to Msgr. Albino Galletto, defined the area as villages and dioceses where 'political, social and religious struggle against the Communists is at its height'²¹. The socio-political threat posed by Communism was regarded as having a cinematic dimension. The menace that was felt was testified to in a circular sent by Msgr. Francesco Dalla Zuanna. The letter, the subject of which was 'Soviet and Communist Films', was sent in 1956 to the Cinema Assistance Service (SAS), an association that provided organisational support to parish cinemas, mainly with regard to the programming of films to be shown. In the letter, despite trying to show objectivity towards those films, especially those that the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico found acceptable for screening in parish cinemas, Msgr. Dalla Zuanna still felt prompted to write that it would be better not to show such films. By showing them, it was felt, parties and initiatives hostile to the Catholic Church would benefit financially, even in only small amounts²².

The document represents an example of how individuals within the Church hierarchy were trying to control what was seen by Italian audiences. By forbidding the screening of any Soviet films in parish cinemas, the Church sought to exercise a firmly political form of censorship. The letter is proof of how this attitude favoured one type of film and censored another.

The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's list of films and their classification provides material to illustrate the trends and directions in post-war Catholic cinema. Over the period 1947–1960, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico considered far more American films than Italian ones (see Table 4.2). However, it classified 256 Italian ones as Excluded as opposed to 313 American ones, a high ratio of Italian films not receiving the seal of approval by the Catholic Censorship Commission, which might come as a surprise considering the higher number of U.S. films looked at²³.

This is significant information because it shows a clear favouring of American films in comparison with the national ones. In fact, if one takes as an example the productions of the years 1951 and 1952, it is possible to see how American films were considered the most suitable from a moral point of view by the Catholics. In 1951 'the highest percentage of films suitable for all belongs to American films (23%) and the lowest to Italy (8%)'. This situation is repeated again the following year²⁴.

This attitude can be read as a way of stopping Italian Neorealism by favouring a great deal of U.S. production, and this issue will be raised again when looking specifically at the Italian films preferred by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. This position becomes even more evident when the number of films that were accepted for screening in parish cinemas is examined. When the For All and For All with Appropriate Changes categories

Table 4.2 Italian and American Films Classified by the Catholic Censorship Commission

	<i>Italy</i>					<i>America</i>				
	For All	For All with Appropriate Changes	For Adult	For Adult with Appropriate Changes	Excluded	For All	For All with Appropriate Changes	For Adult	For Adult with Appropriate Changes	Excluded
1947	13	1	18	6	7	90	1	123	12	35
1948	9	3	18	15	16	42	19	122	57	63
1949	14	-	14	12	15	79	36	173	64	70
1950	8	1	38	22	39	53	32	127	75	44
1951	8	1	28	30	28	45	31	146	72	32
1952	7	5	34	41	22	30	36	116	70	11
1953	6	4	28	52	20	24	30	83	66	5
1954	9	4	48	33	9	12	19	77	77	8
1955	15	4	48	35	7	16	14	81	88	4
1956	12	4	45	27	2	26	15	99	100	3
1957	7	6	38	21	8	20	8	95	91	7
1958	12	4	32	22	14	13	10	99	78	9
1959	9	3	31	33	19	11	2	91	79	10
1960	4	2	17	13	50	12	10	63	46	12
Tot.	133	42	437	362	256	473	263	1495	975	313

(extract from *Guida cinematografica* 1963: XLIX-LXIV)

failed to furnish enough films, the parish cinemas would draw on the For Adult and For Adult with Appropriate Changes groups, which would make up a total of only 974 Italian films to 3,206 American ones, ensuring that young people were not present at the screening (Cipriani 2008).

Regarding this acceptance of American film production, Stephen Gundle (1995: 109) States that despite not presenting rigid moral principles, often Hollywood comedies and Westerns were considered to be most suitable for families. The majority of parish cinemas' audiences were families. Gundle attributes the positive reception of such films to their optimism and escapist nature. They avoided subversive attitudes and helped delete the memory of the recent past, replacing it with a pure fantasy model similar to that which prevailed before the Second World War. This reflects what was often requested by Catholics: 'a picture house which is optimistic and relaxing with wholesome morals, which replaces what is from an artistic and technical point of view a negative and unhealthy production' (Prosperini, RC 1946: 1). This again is what Gori (1981: 14) discovers when examining the 295 films that were categorised between 1934 and 1955 as being acceptable for screening in parish cinemas. They were all escapist films, barely thirty of which did not have a happy ending, but which still saw crime punished, and twenty with a religious theme. This type of harmless entertainment was not supported by everybody within the Catholic establishment. In 1956, for example, the issue of the 'happy ending' was disapproved of in an article published by the authoritative *La civiltà cattolica* and written by Padre Baragli (1956: 40). He criticised the happy ending on the basis that it deprives the spectators of their right to lead a normal life. People would feel persecuted by misfortune if their lives seemed monotonous in comparison to the extraordinary adventures enjoyed by the screen divas.

Baragli's attack on the Hollywood star model is an example of how within the Catholic Church there was a strand of thought that viewed the typical Hollywood formula negatively. It was not to be an isolated case. The luxurious lifestyle available to only a few had already been criticised indirectly by Msgr. Civardi in his *Il cinema di fronte alla morale* (1940: 50). Censorship is a key element in comprehending the content of films acceptable to or refused by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and their ideological meanings. So consequently an in-depth analysis of some American and Italian films shown in Italy will be undertaken in Chapter 6. The Vatican's approach towards the American film industry will be compared to that towards the Italian in the immediate post-war period.

AMERICAN CINEMA AND CATHOLIC PRESS

In the post-war period the Italian Catholic press was composed of about 1,800 newspapers and magazines that covered not only the news and current affairs, but also the arts, with 'an overall circulation of 16 million

copies' (Allum 1990: 85). Amongst these, there were a number of newspapers and magazines, such as *L'Osservatore romano*, *La Civiltà cattolica*, *Il Quotidiano*, *L'Italia* and *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, that Parisella (2000: 70) chooses to define as influential even outside the Catholic world. There were also Catholic journals dependent on the ecclesiastic authority, 120 weekly diocesan magazines and the popular and nationally read weekly *Famiglia cristiana*, which in the immediate post-war period managed to sell over 200,000 copies (Parisella 2000: 72).

When specifically looking at how the Catholic press dealt with the film industry in those years, the oldest publication in Catholic film criticism was *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, the official cinema magazine within the Italian Catholic Action (ACI) (Ciaccio 1962: 106). Set up in 1927 in Milan with the purpose of spreading Catholic morality in relation to cinema, *La Rivista del Cinematografo* would later on move to Rome and become the official film magazine of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (Filizzola, RC 1956a: 32). *La Rivista del Cinematografo* reflected the views of the Vatican towards cinema. The journal gave considerable space to coverage of the film industry and provided a resource for trying to understand the position of the Vatican in relation to various aspects of American cinema. Ugo Sciascia, who in 1947 became General Secretary of the Ente dello Spettacolo, explained the role of the monthly magazine. The journal not only informed Catholic spectators of the most suitable films, but also spread aesthetic and technical knowledge of this new form of art in a Catholic environment and dealt with the moral issues raised (Sciascia, RC 1956: 15).

The other publications linked to the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico were the series of 'Quaderni della Rivista del Cinematografo' published from 1951 by the Ente dello Spettacolo, as well as the publication from 1940 of four very important volumes: Msgr. Luigi Civardi's *I cattolici e il cinematografo* and *Cinema e morale*, G. M. Scotese's *La settima arte (Introduzione al cinema)* and Anastasio Mariani's *Che cos'è questo cinema?* (Ciaccio 1962: 108). Other publications came out between 1940 and 1943: Civardi, Gedda, Gavagna and Beretta's *Coscienza cinematografica*, Gnocchi's *Il problema del cinema* and Scotese's *Il volto del cinema* (Argentieri 1998: 234). Catholic newspapers and journals were all involved in rigorously controlling the morality of films by condemning overly liberal productions and by advising their readers on the best cinematic choices to make. Several articles published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* throughout the 1940s and 1950s refer to the aim of educating cinema audiences. The journal collected opinions and interviews with film representatives and experts in order to establish the criteria for promoting and disseminating a valuable cinematic education.

The Catholic hierarchy's position in relation to the film industry was not just supported by official publications issued by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. Prominent print critics who backed the Vatican's opinion included Nino Ghelli in *Bianco e Nero*, Gian Luigi Rondi in *Il Tempo* and

Padre Baragli in *La civiltà cattolica*, who was said to be the most faithful interpreter of the papal texts (Ciaccio 1962: 139). Padre Nazareno Taddei, who was the official film critic of the journal *Letture*, represents a different case in the relationship between the press and the Catholic establishment. In 1957 this Jesuit literary journal²⁵ began to publish a series of significant film reviews. In 1961 a supportive review of Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) forced the intervention of Cardinal Montini, who put pressure on the



Figure 4.3 The Italian poster for *Some Like It Hot*.

journal editor to condemn the film and severely punish the two journalists less inclined to obey (Bernardini 1985: 73–75; Scurani Alessandro 1994: 1; Scurani, *Lettture* 1995). This episode reveals the power the Vatican could exert over film critics and journals in relation to the official position to take regarding a particular film, which had not been favourably viewed.

In the magazine *Lettture*, the acknowledgment of American films was relatively brief and present often only in the sections on International Festivals, such as Berlin (Taddei 1959: 708, 710), San Sebastian (Taddei 1959: 768–769) and Venice (Taddei 1958: 695–696; Taddei 1959: 698). An example of this attitude was Nazareno Taddei's attack on Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959: 705–706) (see Figure 4.3) for its superficiality and banality.

The other area under which Hollywood films usually appeared in the publication was the individual reviews of films²⁶. Taddei's comments were at times severe towards some U.S. films: *The Long Hot Summer* had an ending which was 'forced, trite and vapid' (1958: 536), *Lust for Life* was criticised for being detached from reality (Taddei 1957: 379), despite a positive comment on Anthony Quinn's and Sophia Loren's acting abilities, *The Black Orchid*'s ending destroyed the whole film (Taddei 1958: 784–786) and *God's Little Acre* became 'a mish-mash of all the ingredients required for a box office hit' (Taddei 1958: 784). Despite not being based on any specific form of Catholic criticism, these comments were certainly controversial compared to a general tendency of support given by Catholic official newspapers and magazines towards American cinema. An interesting example of the position taken by the Church towards American production is the publication in 1947 by the Catholic Edizioni AVE (Anonima Veritas Editrice) of Sergio Sollima's book *Il cinema in U.S.A.* The first part is an historical analysis of the American cinema from the start of the twentieth century. The second concentrates on the representation in American films of certain stock characters, such as the 'pioneer', the 'gentleman', the 'sophisticated lady', the 'vamp' and 'the youth'. The book also examines topics such as the family in American cinema, concentrating on areas such as sex, marriage, children, family life and divorce, as well as work, social classes, law, race, culture and religion. Despite acknowledging the presence of important directors and actors in American cinema, as a whole the book was very critical towards the American film industry, defining it as mass-produced (Sollima 1947: 97). A film of artistic value was the exception that was isolated from any broader artistic movement (Sollima 1947: 85). According to Sollima (1947: 229) the motivation for production in Hollywood was the desire to reach a mass audience rather than to try to create artistic masterpieces. The themes were all about love and had the obligatory happy ending. The actors were all beautiful and well-publicised so that spectators would return to see them in other films. The scripts and dialogues were all superficial and escapist. And the photography, scenes and costumes were all pleasing and well-to-do (Sollima 1947: 229).

American cinema of this kind, with the happy ending, the beautiful stars and the superficial dialogues created to reach audiences, apparently did not jar with the Vatican. Rather, the optimistic and positive cinema made in Hollywood represented a safer, more anodyne option for the Catholic hierarchy than did some Italian national productions. Sollima's book was out

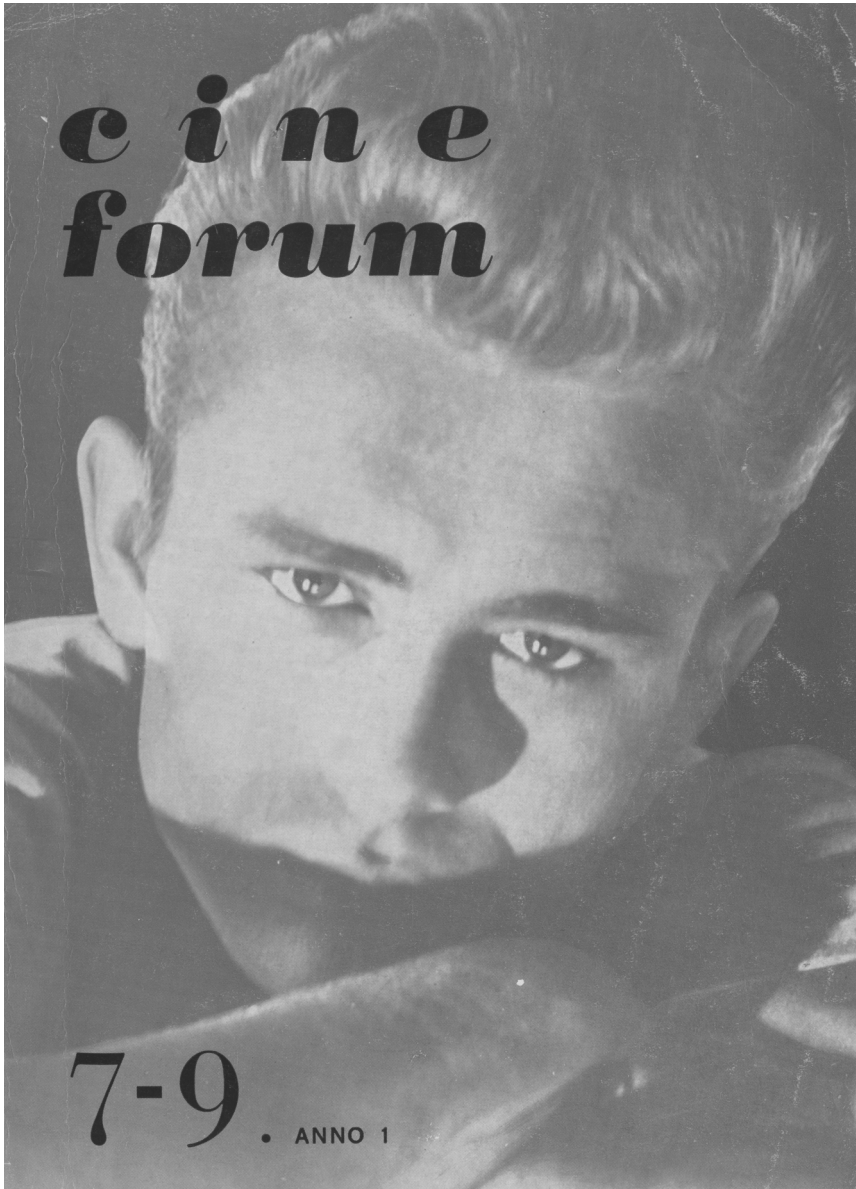


Figure 4.4 James Dean on the front page of *Cineforum*, courtesy Cineforum.

of synch with these attitudes and soon after its publication in 1947 its publisher withdrew it. The Catholic newspaper film critic Renato Filizzola, in an interview given to the author in April 2003, explains that the reason for the withdrawal was that the book was too open-minded. However, there is room for speculation about whether this was the true reason, or whether the harshness of the author's attack on American cinema, the products of which the Vatican was prepared to support, had prompted the publishing house to remove the title from its list.

A survey of the Catholic press in relation to cinema would not be complete without remembering the journal *Cineforum*, which was first published in 1961 (see Figure 4.4). Despite not being part of the years analysed here, it becomes significant because it establishes and legitimises the joint effort on the part of the ecclesiastic hierarchy and the Catholic organisations to promote a common cultural agenda.

The Cineforums had come into being during the immediate post-war period. The first Cineforum had been organised in Milan in July 1948 with the intention of combining the screening of and comment on a series of films (Viganò 1997: 116). This idea was not new in itself. Already in 1926 the same city hosted a Cineconference in order to screen films for a selected audience, and in the immediate post-war period several cineclubs would combine the viewing of a film with critical debate about it (Tosi 1999). The cineclubs, which by 1949 numbered over fifty, had the objective of showing art films, cinema classics and films in their original language to a small audience, all in order to fight 'against those who believed cinema was only escapism from real life' (Tosi 1949: 127). This purpose would be achieved by viewing films which often did not have the censorship approval from the Government and by inviting speakers who could discuss the artistic, and often social aspects, of these films. The close link between the cineclubs and the left-wing magazine *Cinema*, and the growing interest of the Communist Party in getting involved in these cinema associations are clear signs of a rising awareness of the importance of these organisations in promoting a certain type of cinema. Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (Paisan) (1946), for instance, was strongly supported by the Communist Party, which invited film critics to its viewing in order to explain to selected audiences the significance of such a film (Tosi 1999: 38–39, 101). However, whether it was supporting Neorealism or films forbidden in public cinemas, the activity of the cineclubs became a slight concern for the Government. In a parliamentary debate on 29 April 1950, Giulio Andreotti expressed the need to control the cineclubs with utmost vigour in order to guarantee what he defined as a greater respect for the law.

While the educating power of film was strengthened by the activities of this kind of association across the country, the Catholic establishment started to investigate the possibility of a Catholic version of cineclubs. In 1947 Mario Verdone had already discussed the idea of an organised viewing of a film, with the aim of achieving a Catholic defence against the immorality

of certain productions (Verdone, RC 1947: 9). However, it was the First Congresso Nazionale dei Cineforum organised in June 1953 which ratified the official birth of the Italian Association of Cineforum (May, RC 1956: 102). In that year there were twenty-two Cineforums regularly organised with a total of 18,264 members, over sixty Cineforum 'groups' which operated without an official association and almost 6,000 screenings in less than ten years and fifteen courses of film studies organised (May, RC 1956: 102). Moreover, in an article signed by, amongst others, Msgr. Galletto, Padre Morlion, Dr. Rondi, and Professor May, the need to clarify the role of Catholic cultural activities was expressed and the Cineforum was defined as an organisation which aimed to promote a cinematic cultural movement which could have a profound effect on Italian public opinion ("Cineforum e film-forum", RC 1953: 9). By 1952 the phenomenon of the Cineforum had spread outside Italy and had arrived in countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Canada and Australia (Ruzskowski, RC 1952: 6).

It has been argued that the Cineforum movement arose principally from a political context. In his *Come sono nati i cineforum* (1995), Enzo Natta States that in 1944 Padre Felix Morlion, a Belgian Dominican who had been working for the American secret service, later to become the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), arrived in Rome with the intention of founding the Università Pro Deo. This was an organisation that was to be defined by Giancarlo Zizola as an ideological source for Catholic anti-communism (quoted in Natta 1995). It was within this institution that Felix Morlion developed the idea of the Cineforum, as 'an instrument which by joining the image (the film) to the word (the debate), allows the spectator not to undergo passively the message coming from the screen, but to become an active part of the communicative relationship between screen and audience' (Natta 1995: web.tiscalinet.it/ofslombardiaph/phcine.htm). In his article, Natta defined the Cineforum as a powerful political device, citing Padre Morlion's own words. He suggested that cinema is the strongest form of attraction, as people would rather see a film than go to church or to a Catholic Action meeting (quoted in Natta 1995).

Therefore, the Cineforum provided a good means of enabling issues that were facing contemporary Italian society to be discussed and analysed through the medium of cinema. This allowed for what Morlion defined as 'social penetration' that was not possible in any other way. The Cineforum was defined by Tosi (1999: 190), as 'the confessional form of cine-clubs', an established organisation which in the spring of 1950 already consisted of eighty groups (circoli del cinema) across Italy and which was considered a means by which the left-wing political parties were seeking to promote their propaganda ("La Redazione", RC 1953: 3; Tosi 1979: 329). The article illustrated that there was a contemporary struggle raging between the so-called left-wingers and the Catholic establishment to try to influence cinema and its audiences. According to La Redazione, left-wing intellectuals had been amongst the founders of the main Circoli di Cinema and had spread Soviet films to its numerous

members, made up especially of workers and peasants, clearly perverting the original aims of the Circoli ("La Redazione", RC 1953: 3).

The influential role of the Circoli di Cinema and the awareness of their power both by the leftist parties and by the Catholic organisations were discussed further in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* by the editor of the magazine. He was forced to reply to two letters, one of which was written by the director Alessandro Blasetti. The editor's responses specifically referred to the Government's ban on the screening of the film *La vittoria del popolo cinese*²⁷ (Studio Documentaristico di Pechino, 1951) at the Circolo Charlie Chaplin in Rome. He asserted that the decision had been right because the Soviets try to show their films 'through apparently commercial associations which are in fact directly controlled' (Rossetti, RC 1953: 2). This form of 'contraband' aimed, according to *La Rivista del Cinematografo*'s editor, at spreading films with a clear political aim (Blasetti, RC 1953: 7) was stopped by the Government with the approval of the Catholic establishment (Rossetti, RC 1953: 2). It is worth underlining this cohesion of interests between the Italian Government and the Catholic institutions, both concerned about any attempt to spread what they considered to be 'subversive ideas', especially when coming from any Communist country. The Government had become aware of the political affiliation of the Circoli di Cinema and tried to control their screening activity. This had not happened in the case of the Cineforum. As the Circoli did often avoid the censorship imposed by the Government and still screened films not permitted in public cinemas, Giulio Andreotti felt the pressure of Parliament to intervene in this direction. On 23 June 1953 he wrote an official circular (prot. 11994/Co. 490—Oggetto: Funzionamento circoli del cinema) which, while it seemed to allow the Circoli to carry on screening films with no revision in authorisation, clearly gave a warning and showed how local authorities could get involved in stopping any of these activities should they become public events. The immediate reaction of the State, that is to control any dangerous screenings and the strong support given by the Vatican in this, are examples of an effort promoted to minimise the political propaganda conveyed by the Circoli del Cinema. No similar intervention took place with regard to the Catholic cineforum. (For further information on Circoli del Cinema see Tosi 1999.)

The importance of the intervention of the Catholic establishment in the development of the film industry in post-war Italy was also marked by the foundation of the Catholic Association of Film Critics (ACCC). The organisation was founded by the Ente dello Spettacolo and constituted within the Catholic Union of Italian Press (UCSI) on 30 of January 1961 (*Guida cinematografica* 1963: XXXVI). The Vatican itself felt the need to comment directly on the importance of film criticism. In his *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) Pope Pius XII addressed the issue of morality of films, calling on film critics to consider this when writing about cinema. Salvatore Canals described the principal requirements for being a film critic as: knowledge of the cinematic

medium, a strong religious culture and familiarity with the main principles of morality and Christian spirituality (Canals 1961: 71). *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (Bruno 1950: 14–15; Verdone 1953: 23; Verdone 1956: 3, 11–12) published several articles that tried to define a ‘Catholic strand of criticism’ both by distinguishing the artistic value from the ethical one and by alerting the magazine’s readership to the possible dangers of the cinema. These potential perils were often associated by the Catholic Church with Italian Neorealism. The attitudes of the Catholic Church and the Italian State Government towards Italian Neorealism is a thoroughly researched field. Several Italian films made in the wake of Neorealism posed a real dilemma for the Catholic establishment. Fellini’s *La dolce vita* created an extensive mobilisation of the Catholic Church organisation, with one Jesuit asking his congregation for mass expiation for the sins committed by those who had seen the film. Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Rocco and His Brothers) (1960) was defined as being at the endpoint of ethical and aesthetical perversion (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1551). In 1951 *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (Ammannati, RC 1951: 7) published an article written by Ammannati, who stated that the role of the cinema was meant ‘to encourage not to depress’. The encouragement to find in cinema reasons for optimism and to produce more films such as the American *The Best Years of Our Lives* is a clear confirmation of the type of movie desired by the Catholic establishment. Optimism and positivity were the key elements that the Catholic press emphasised in order to protect those family values that might be endangered by a certain type of entertainment. The upbeat articles published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* often spoke of a certain type of film, and in many cases these were American. “Frank Capra, o dell’ottimismo” is the title of a review by the critic Gian Luigi Rondi, who praised the American director for being consoling and serene and for promoting a reassuring optimism. Rondi described it as a belief in the virtues of humankind and in man’s courageous attempt to resist any form of injustice in the name of love towards humanity (RC 1952: 25).

This message of hope and justice appeared in several Hollywood films, that Giuliana Muscio reads as being so ‘transparent’ and apparently ‘non-ideological’ as they did not seem to ‘transmit an explicit political message’ (Muscio 2000: 123). This must have been a very strong point in favour of Hollywood films, which flooded not only commercial cinemas but also parish ones. When the Catholic Exhibitors’ Association (ACEC) was founded in 1949, it was defined by some as an attempt to subjugate cinemas to American production as an act of sabotage of the Italian industry (“Esercizio cinematografico forza dei Cattolici”, RC 1951: 22). The wide range of articles on American cinema published by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* can be read as a confirmation of it. There were general articles on the State of the Hollywood industry in America, reports on the Oscar ceremonies, articles on popular American genres like Westerns, musicals, comedies and gangster films, and in-depth profiles of directors and stars.

Many of the topics presented religious dimensions discussed by journalists in relation to American cinema. Film advertising campaigns praised the intervention of some American Catholic journalists who complained about the inappropriate use of film adverts. American Catholic production and American religious cinema was discussed and defined as the best in the world, obtaining great artistic and popular success and gaining an incalculable importance as the expression of individual intuition rather than a collective movement. The monopoly of Hollywood major studios and the role of independent productions was analysed in relation to the reaction of Europe to the flood of American cinema. American films present at the Venice Film Festival, antiracism and black characters in American films, violence in U.S. films from an early age and the role of the Legion of Decency were all examples of issues in American cinema debated on the pages of the Catholic press. Also, from the 1950s a regular section called 'Divagazioni sull'America' (written by Carlo Baima) described various aspects of American cinema, from screening solutions to audiences' preferences and reactions to specific films²⁸.

Despite the criticism of disrespectful eroticism and violence in gangster films (Castellani, RC 1960a: 367) or the lack of intrinsic morality in science-fiction movies (Mazzara, RC 1957: 59) or some form of superficiality in epic films (Castellani, RC 1961: 91), the articles which discuss the most popular genres give a generally positive portrait of American cinema. The Western movie is clearly associated with the idea of Americanness, where the American flag is the enthusiastic expression of:

a young and simple people who have faith in the future, who become ever more self-aware and who every day love more that puzzling yet marvellous America, defined by a poet as a cheery open terrace over the continents. (Baima, RC 1954:22)

The positivity expressed in this passage, despite not being a unique characteristic of Roman Catholicism, is still appreciated by a Catholic audience especially when Western films acquired a more human approach under the direction of John Ford. John Ford and Frank Capra were extensively discussed and praised in *La Rivista del Cinematografo*²⁹. Ford's values were, according to Mast (1981: 240), 'traditional and sentimental: the pure woman, the home, the family, decency, democracy'. These could not have been more appreciated by Catholic critics, who found a Christian message in Ford's Western films, where 'sin, guilt and forgiveness' represented fundamental aspects of the director's spiritual belief and ethnic origins (Lourdeaux 1990: 109) and his characters would be ready to start a more worthy life (Castellani, RC 1960: 192). He was praised by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (La Redazione, RC 1953: 5) when in 1953, during a visit to Rome, he visited the headquarters of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, as Frank Capra did, and later was defined as a poet of harmony and

author of the most decisive expression of Christian harmony ever reached in cinema (Rondi, RC 1953: 12). This concept of collectiveness was also the thematic centre of Rossellini's most spiritual films, where salvation could only be achieved in the context of a group (Brunette 1987: 28–29). However, as Brunette (1987: 29) remembers, with some of his Neorealist films, 'Rossellini was accused of betraying [. . .] *coralità* in favour of the petty concern of the individual'.

The gangster film and the film *noir*, exemplified in the work of John Huston and Edward Dmytryk, offered a negative hero with whom the spectator could identify (Castellani, RC 1960a: 367). They were, though, a meditation on existence and life:

And such works emanate an anxiety which is a desperate yearning for the need to affirm those spiritual values which permit man to escape from chance and blind fatalism. (Ghelli, RC 1956: 19)

Epic and even science-fiction films could be held to be 'moral' in their own way (Castellani, RC 1961: 93; Mazzara, RC 1957: 59). The American comedies were in the vanguard and were regarded as being able to help people to face problems more easily, hoping for a happy ending in life as well as on the screen (Castellani, RC 1960b: 323), and in the musical the cooperation between music and image provided a valid formula to bring man closer to God (Da Vià, RC 1950: 2).

Hollywood directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Elia Kazan and Cecil B. DeMille were also praised either because they would offer a positive image of America, or because of their morality and spirituality that allowed them to be admitted to the sphere of the best in the world. De Mille regained his standing—following a series of films that were too erotic and spectacular—with *The Ten Commandments* (1956), in which he reached a suggestive and harmonious mastery never grasped before (Vincent, RC 1959: 56–57). Kazan was praised for the intense, wild and moving humanity he achieved in *On the Waterfront* (1954) ("N.G.", RC 1955: 12), which was already praised in the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* (XXXVI-Disp. 15 1954: 115) of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico:

The film tackles social problems with rigorous poetic commitment, revealing a dramatic force, a narrative impetuousness and an acuteness of psychological enquiry which is truly exemplary. It is certainly one of the most lively examples of American Realist cinema.

A work such as *East of Eden* (1955) was also praised:

For the first time the law of Love, a determining element in the day of Justice, assumes solidity and a dramatic substance in cinema: and with

absolute authenticity the world of Kazan finds complete and perfect expression. ("N.G.", RC 1955: 12)

The selection of actors portrayed by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* is very closely linked to either their religious faith or the morality of their roles. Gregory Peck's best interpretation was considered by Ettore Giglio (RC 1950: 4) to be the priest in John M. Stahl's *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1944), while he felt very disappointed with the actor's character in King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946): 'a criminal, impulsive, a violent man without conscience or morality'. During a visit to Rome in 1953, Gary Cooper was interviewed by Massimo Chiodini solely on the role of Catholic Cineforum, and the American actor gave a very supportive response:

Catholic Cineforums are extremely useful because they can function as a restraint from an antimaterialistic point of view, which is very useful today and can also exert a great influence. I can say that Catholic Cineforums also exist in America and they are highly regarded. [. . .] But the reason that the Cineforum activity is so important in my opinion is that they can influence the nation's film production in a positive and correct way; for example in America there was a time when only gangster films were produced, so much so that the whole world believed that America was populated only by gangsters. This is not right and therefore a movement which influences public opinion is definitely a highly positive factor, especially from a moral point of view. (Chiodini, RC 1953: 11)

The importance of the Cineforums and the significance they had not just in Italy is a confirmation of what has already been stated in this section. The role of this kind of association was not only to direct audiences towards what the Catholic institutions felt were the best films, but also to put pressure on production companies in order to generate a form of entertainment which would respond to moral and social codes. In Chapter 5, this issue will be raised again when looking at the *Segnalazioni Cinematografiche*, which were compiled by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in order to give guidelines to parish and non-parish cinemas about the most suitable films to watch.

While a Catholic cinema in post-war Italy was difficult to define, as the number and influence of 'Catholic' productions was very limited, the part played by the Vatican in the distribution of American films has proved to be significant. On the one hand parish cinemas represented a third of the national exhibition in terms of seats and on the other the Italian Catholic press seemed to favour particularly certain American film productions. The role of Catholic censorship is further explored in the next chapter and will lead to a series of case studies, which are the central concern of Chapter 6.

5 Dispelling the Myth

The Popularity of American and Italian Cinema in Post-War Italy and the Response of the Catholic Church

Ever since the First World War, Europe has been one of the principal markets for Hollywood films. This success meant that the popularity of American-made films represented a threat to the financial health, and even viability, of national film industries. Therefore, during the Second World War American films were banned in some countries of mainland Europe, in order to protect the national film industry. The Italian State film corporation was given a monopoly of distribution of imported films in 1938. Four of the eight American Majors (Twentieth Century Fox, MGM, Paramount and Warner Bros.) withdrew from the Italian market in retaliation against this decision. After the Second World War, however, Italy became one of the largest foreign markets for the American film industry. For the American production companies, weakening the competition was certainly the best way to maximise the profit, especially for an industry such as the American one that was seeking to optimise the return on its investments in production.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the popularity of American films in post-war Italy and to dispel the myth that the flood of Hollywood films inhibited the national film production from flourishing. In fact, box office figures reveal that the Italian cinema was in a healthy, vibrant condition. And this did not only happen from 1961, as Maggie Gunsberg (2005) affirms, thanks to the Spaghetti Western and the Peplum. The victory of indigenous cinema over Hollywood had started from the years before the Second World War and continued after the end of the conflict.

The chapter also aims to investigate ways in which American ideology was spread and received in Italy through America's most popular films. This will help to comprehend how it corresponded to the ideology also promoted by the Vatican. In order to do so, I will give an overview of the most successful American films shown in Italy between 1945 and 1960, identifying common themes, genres and characters and also attempting to compare them with their Italian counterparts. I will then analyse whether the same films were accepted in the parish cinemas and which ones were the most recommended by the Vatican or excluded by the parish cinemas' circuit. I will do that by looking at the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* written by the

Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, which represented the most authoritative institution under the control of the Vatican to direct film production and distribution.

THE SUCCESS OF AMERICAN AND ITALIAN FILMS IN ITALY IN 1945–1960

How many people saw a film in Rome, Milan or Turin in 1953? And how many spectators are needed to define a film as successful? Starting in October 1945, the *Bollettino di informazioni*, edited by the Exhibitors’ Association (AGIS) took to addressing the quantitative aspects of audience and attempted an analysis and a comment on the figures of the film industry in Italy. The outcome is a fascinating examination of films, which is very relevant for this research. How differently the main cities and towns reacted to specific films will not be analysed in detail. However, the success certain films had in Rome and Milan will be borne in mind, as they certainly represented the two major cities for box office intake. This signifies a particular interest from the capital and the major Northern city into the cinematic world but also a different way of assessing films from other towns and cities across the country¹.

Italian and American films generally are, as expected, at the top of the audiences’ preferences. If one looks at 1955 just as an example, the figures are the expression of a certain taste, as shown in Table 5.1.

This does not come as a surprise and it explains even further the rationale for concentrating on these two categories of films. Lorenzo Quaglietti (1995: 314) gives, though, a very practical reason for the success of U.S. films in Italy. The author believes that it was only a matter of quantity, as the Italian market was totally dominated by American movies and Italian audiences had little choice when going to the cinema. However, the comparison in box office receipts between American and Italian productions differs significantly and shows quite clearly how Italians’ decisions were

Table 5.1 Box-office Receipts in 1955

1955	Number	Box-office takings
Italian Films	84	£3,405,760,000
American Films for normal screen	128	£3,972,642,000
American Films in CinemaScope	19	£1,977,383,000
French Films and co-production Films shot in France	11	£ 219,067,000
British Films	7	£ 167,265,000

(Extract from Ferraù, “Italia e America prime nelle graduatorie degli incassi”, BI 14/4/1955: 1)

not just influenced by the distribution, but were also the expression of their feeling and preferences when going to the cinema. The information in the *Bollettino di informazioni* is very valuable because the magazine registers a shift in trends in the success of certain productions. In 1949 the average box office taking for an Italian film was 53,583,610 lire, compared to £43,756,248 for its American counterpart, in 1950 it was £70,202,208 to £50,853,005, and in 1951 it was £73,997,665 compared to £60,204,461 (Quaglietti 1995: 311). In 1958 American productions gained an average daily box office intake of around £275,000 against £345,000 earned by the Italian films. This is highly revealing if compared with the previous year, when the Italians earned only 305,000 lire compared with £360,000 for the Americans.

The expression 'shift in trends for box office intakes' used by Alessandro Ferraù in his year-by-year analysis of the box office takes in the *Bollettino di informazioni* is applicable to this variability, and also pertinent to the relationship between American and Italian film successes, which were very different when looking at each year and also at each geographical area (Ferraù, "L'altalena degli incassi", BI 1957: 3). This, however, does not seem to correspond to the figures given in a report by Eitel Monaco, President of the Producers' Association (ANICA), where, when looking at the category *Gross Box-Office Intake According to the Nationality of the Films*, the Italians managed to overtake the Americans only after 1960². However, in the season 1951–1952 a report on the activity of the Anica affirmed that audience reception to Italian film was exceptional, reminding us how the success of Italian films in the first run of the first sixteen cities had significantly increased in comparison with American and French films³. The following year (1953), despite the fact that the top six most successful films are all American, a survey compiled by *Show Business* magazine shows the triumph of some Italian directors in the years between 1947 and 1952: Raffaello Matarazzo (*Catene* and *Tormento*: £1.2 billion), and then Alberto Lattuada, Alessandro Blasetti, Mario Camerini, Mario Mattoli and Giuseppe De Santis (*Cinema Nuovo* 1/6/1953, pp. 322–323).

If one goes back to the individual films, in 1952 *Don Camillo* was so successful (£284,556,000) that it stayed at the top of the chart not just for its year but since the end of World War II. Some Italian films also became surprisingly successful in Southern regions, which had always been fairly insensitive to indigenous productions and much more inclined towards Hollywood⁴. This shows that, while some American films may have been more popular in big cities (Gunsberg 2005: 25), their place in Southern regions was challenged by domestic productions. In 1954, for instance, Luigi Comencini's *Pane, amore e fantasia* (Bread, Love and Dreams) is at the top of the chart in all major Italian cities apart from Milan and Rome, where *The Robe*, the first film in CinemaScope, managed to beat the Italian film. In 1955 two Italian films (Luigi Comencini's *Pane, amore e gelosia* [Bread, Love and Jealousy], and Vittorio De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli* [The Gold of

Naples]) (see Figure 5.1) were so popular that they were able to beat the top two most successful American films (Delmer Daves' *Demetrius and the Gladiators* and Richard Thorpe's *Knights of the Round Table*); in 1956 the Italian production was doing so well that the U.S. films only reached third



Figure 5.1 Sophia Loren and Totò, stars of *L'Oro di Napoli*, on the front page of *Cinema* magazine.

place in the top ten (Robert Z. Leonard's *La donna più bella del mondo* [The World's Most Beautiful Woman] and Dino Risi's *Pane, amore e . . .* [Scandal in Sorrento] managed to beat Richard Fleischer's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the top U.S. film in the chart), a phenomenon which was repeated in the first six months of 1958, where amongst films which earned over £200 million, half of them are Italian and two of them (Dino Risi's *Belle ma povere* [Poor Girl, Pretty Girl] with £645 million and Mario Camerini's *Vacanze a Ischia* [Holiday Island] with £523 million) came third and fourth after—with no great distance—two American films (“1959: Non volano cicogne per il cinema italiano”, RC 1959: 18).

In 1955, Italian films for the normal screen⁵ had a box office taking of an average of over £40.5 million *per* film, which was notably higher than the American counterpart (£31 million), representing 25% less than the Italian films⁶. CinemaScope technology⁷, created in 1953, was a factor in maintaining the popularity of American films in Italy. In 1955, 45% of films in CinemaScope made a profit of over £50 million against 3% of American films for the normal screen and against only seven Italian films out of forty-four produced in that year. The American production company Fox Film, in fact, which in 1955 had made only nine films in CinemaScope (*Night People*, *Demetrius and the Gladiators*, *Broken Lance*, *River of No Return*, *Hell and High Water*, *Garden of Evil*, *Prince Valiant*, *The Egyptian*, and *Three Coins in the Fountain*) appreciated the impact of the new technology on the Italian marketplace and obtained a total of £1,221,524,000. In 1956 almost half of the profit of the first run was generated by the ninety-eight American films, meaning that 24% of the total releases (American films for CinemaScope) had generated over 50% of the total proceeds (Ferraù, “A nove mesi data”, BI 19/6/1956: 3). The impact of CinemaScope was not just limited to the larger screens. The technology was also used to show better special effects on smaller screens as well as a way of utilising technology in order to improve the narrative⁸. This is what Colombo (1999: 233) defines as ‘a commercial cinema, or in the American version, a spectacular cinema’. In fact, if one still concentrates on 1956, one will see that at the top of the chart are still ‘spectacular films, comedies, biopics and melodramas and a film of authentic artistic commitment (*East of Eden*)’⁹.

Therefore, at times American films had to do a bit more than just be American in order to gain audiences’ interest and, while Italians were receptive to American films, their consumption of them was firmly rooted in Italian society and culture.

GENRES, STYLES AND STARS IN ITALIAN AND AMERICAN FILMS

In 1957 Callisto Cosulich argued in an article in *Cinema nuovo* (“La battaglia sulle cifre” 1957: 18) that it was in the numerous popular films that

the substantive real success of Italian cinema during these years was to be found rather than in the ten or fifteen Neorealist ‘classics’. Ferrau made a general distinction between two types of films (‘artistic’ and ‘spectacular’), without giving precise indications on the distinction, but stating that the second was the more successful one, and also explaining how artistic films in Italy very rarely managed to overcome their financial difficulties¹⁰. In a table compiled by Ernesto Rossi in 1960 on *Gross Receipts of the Most Successful National Films and State Subsidies for Their Producers Up to March 31st 1959*, there was no film that Rossi felt able to put in the artistic category (Rossi 1960: Tabella VI). Rossi accuses the Italian State of financing the wrong films by declaring that out of the eighty full-length feature films listed in the table, perhaps only five or six would merit State subsidies, compiling a list of films which should have received a fine for being offensive to art, to decency or to historical truth (Rossi 1960: Tabella VI). This Statement underlines the link established by legislation (specifically Andreotti’s laws: the 448/49 tax on dubbing and the 958/49 cinema law) between box office takings and Government funding of the film industry, as well drawing attention to the issue of quality of national productions. While it is true that a vigorous film industry needs “economic” subsidies (designed as an incentive to filmmaking which finds a public) over “cultural” subsidies (which incentivise quality films no one will pay to see), the issue of cultural merits over quantitative ones will need to be addressed with regard to matters such as audiences’ reception, State censorship and Catholic reactions.

The distinction raised by Ferrau in terms of artistic and spectacular films is clearly visible through examining which films, during the years 1945–1954, had the highest box office takings¹¹ (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Italian Films with the Highest Box Office Takings, 1945–1954

<i>Cinematic season</i>	<i>Title of the film which took the most at the box office</i>	<i>Box Office takings</i>
1945–1946	Roma città aperta	162,000,000
1946–1947	Come persi la guerra	294,000,000
1947–1948	Rigoletto	224,100,000
1948–1949	Fabiola	572,500,000
1949–1950	Catene	724,500,000
1950–1951	Domani è troppo tardi	777,200,000
1951–1952	Canzoni di mezzo secolo	709,400,000
1952–1953	Don Camillo	1,421,000,000
1953–1954	Pane amore e fantasia	1,102,000,000

In this table all the main genres of Italian films successful at the time seem to be represented. One finds, in fact, the operatic and musical genre (*Rigoletto* and *Canzoni di mezzo secolo* [Half a Century of Song]), optimistic Neorealism (*Pane amore e fantasia* [Bread, Love and Dreams]), comic (*Don Camillo*), historical (*Fabiola*), and melodrama (*Catene*). However, *Roma città aperta* (Rome Open City) seems to be the only case where a correspondence between what is considered to be an artistic production and the audience's interest takes place.

The box office receipts of American films in Italy provide a means of discerning what the interest of the Italian audience towards different types of Hollywood cinema was. The varying receptions that the principal Hollywood genres experienced in Italy also provide a degree of illumination on both American ideology and Italian culture. This will allow us to have a picture of an industry which was so significant at the time that it would be obviously called political in Douglas Kellner's (1998: 359) definition as 'it tends to support dominant American values and institutions'. It would also help defining the audiences receptive to what Tom Ryall defines the ideological system, where 'the genre system, or, at least, certain genres, impose beliefs and values to some degree' (Ryall 1998: 330). This facilitates an assessment of how the reception of certain films helped influence contemporary Italian life and also shaped the Italian film industry itself. In his essay "Hollywood Film and Society", Kellner (1998: 357) echoes this:

In order to resonate to audience fears, fantasies, and experiences, the Hollywood genres had to deal with the central conflicts and problems in US society, and had to offer soothing resolutions, assuring its audiences that all problems could be solved within existing institutions.

As genre films were a recognised form of popular and populist cinema, it is thus fair to suggest that, despite the at-the-time-problematic undertone of some of the 1950s films (representation of race, or violence, for instance), they would still have been received as offering a reassuring, conventional mode of entertainment, with 'soothing resolutions'. This is not very far away from what Christian Democrats wanted to promote in their cultural ideology. They were keen on stopping national cinema from spreading doubts and liberating themes, and instead favoured proclaiming reassuring lifestyles and traditional values. This desire was in accord with the Vatican's ideology¹². Bizzarri (1987: 24) links the Italian Government's support of American production to this precise ideological strategy. American cinema provided a form of escapism for which there was a strong contemporary demand in Italy. Italian audiences, at one removed from the culture of American film production, could well have received the films in a similar way. It is vital to analyse what effect the 'soothing resolutions' offered to the American audiences had on the Italian ones and compare Kellner's descriptive definition of American ideology to what the Vatican, and the

Christian Democratic Government, was interested in promoting through the cinematic medium.

When looking at the most successful American genres in Italy, Westerns were certainly one of the most popular, with an average of thirty-five films per year from 1945 until the end of the Fifties. Western films had in many ways come to represent America, its myth and its landscape (Lourdeaux 1990: 117). Hollywood stars such as Gary Cooper, Kirk Douglas, Henry Fonda, Gregory Peck, and James Stewart starred in many of the best-known post-war offerings, and Italians keenly attended the release of any new American Western (Quaglietti 1991: 97–100)¹³. The success of the Western in Italy in the ten years before could be ascribed on one side to its fairly consistent iconography, which would allow Italian audiences to identify recurrent symbols and visual motifs more easily in comparison to other genres, such as crime films, and have a similar experience every time (Maltby 1995: 86; Wagstaff 1992: 254). On the other hand, Western films also presented America as a land full of contrasts, where novelty and tradition, wilderness and civilization would coexist and be the foundation of that American myth so endemic in post-war Italy. Moreover, in Western films, ‘hyper masculine toughness’ in male roles and domesticated female characters embodied the values of family so desired by a Catholic society like the Italian one (Belton 1990: 257; Bruzzi 2005: 3). It is important also not to forget that a male-dominated audience, like the Italian one, was certainly more interested in adventure formulas than other genres (Wagstaff 1992: 260).

While the other most successful genre in Italy, war films, corresponded with the same success this genre had in America, the musical did not repeat the same degree of success in Italy that it enjoyed in the United States¹⁴. Fred Astaire and Ginger Roger’s films succeeded in attracting a large following while most of the others were not as popular as they had been in the United States, perhaps because at that time Italian audiences could choose their own musicals¹⁵. The Italian musical film was, in fact, fairly popular, as it represented a form of escapism from the horrors of the war. As Spinazzola (1985: 56) states, it would take audiences into a higher sphere, fascinating them with a grandiloquent image of sublime and blinding passions and with a portrait of humanity, grandiose in both its good and evil forms. Films such as *Rigoletto* (1946–1947), *La signora delle camelie* (The Lost One) (1947–1948), *Il trovatore* (1948–1949) and *Puccini* (1952–1953) all gained enormous success in their years. These films were either films based on what Ferraù calls an operatic music (such as *Aida*, *Puccini*, and *Giuseppe Verdi*) or films interpreted by a star such as Luciano Tajoli (*Canzoni per le strade* or *Il romanzo della mia vita*) or as for the year 1951 and 1952 Neapolitan films (*Vedi Napoli e poi mori* [See Naples and Die] and *La Città canora* [Melody of Love]) (Ferraù, “Italia e America prime nelle graduatorie degli incassi”, *BI* 1955: 1).

What was called *melodrama* and defined as not really dissimilar from the operatic film was another very successful genre, which had played

with the narrative structure and sentiments characteristic of nineteenth-century Italian serials and was often despised by film critics (Caldiron 2004: 11, 14–15). The genre had its climax with Matarazzo's *Catene* interpreted by Amedeo Nazzari in 1949, succeeded in the following two seasons by two of Matarazzo's other films, *Tormento* and *I figli di nessuno* (Nobody's Children), as well as *Anna* by Alberto Lattuada which gained over a billion lire in 1952. What Ferraù illustrated as popular genre signified in the case of the *melodrama* a clear set structure, a dramatic narrative composed of a depressing plot with some comical elements, a musical comment often performed by the star of the time and a set of defined moral values. A fight against evil, with the final victory of good which outlined Matarazzo's films, where characters, despite all being victims of social injustices, passions or a cruel destiny, manage to reach a happy ending through hope for a better world, are defined in a Catholic light by Spinazzola. This hope for justice and happiness is at the same time the expression of 'a intimately deluded Catholicism, devoid of the strength to fight' (Spinazzola 1985: 70–71). The re-establishment of order (Maltby 1995: 35) typical of Matarazzo's films is not very different from the happy ending of Hollywood films. In fact, despite Matarazzo's characters needing to have a certain degree of misfortune and a large amount of grief, in order to be real in post-war Italy, it was of vital importance for them to be able to restore their balance. This was what an artisan interviewed by Carlo Sannita in 1954 (and published in *Cinema* in the article "The Public Like Melodramas") had expressed after the viewing of *Tormento*:

What counts is the final victory of innocence and of justice over rascals and over the trials of fate. (Sannita 1954)

Sannita further commented on how the artisan's observation was not a critical judgement, but more of an ethical consideration, shared by the majority of the popular public, which directors of films such as *Tormento* needed to take into account in order to achieve the extraordinary success they obtained in the Fifties.

The victory of innocence and justice, which seems to be extremely important for Italian audiences, is perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of success of gangster films. During the Fascist era the gangster genre had run into considerable opposition from officialdom, in large part because its movies tried to make anti-heroes out of criminals but also because of the fact that many of the worst villains had Italian names (Quaglietti 1991: 103). Post 1945, gangster movies did experience a clear rise in their popularity but the genre did not repeat the degree of popularity that it had enjoyed in the United States. They were often criticised for the negative influence especially over young audiences¹⁶. However, the momentum of the Italian image of America became a problem for those Hollywood filmmakers who

wished to make movies that bore witness to the more problematic aspects of their homeland. For many Italians, whose principal experience of United States was through the prism of Hollywood escapism, such a depiction of America was unsettling. In 1955 the American Ambassador in Italy, Clare Booth Luce, refused to participate in the Mostra del Cinema di Venezia because it was due to include a screening of Richard Brooks' *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955), which portrayed American juvenile delinquency. She disapproved of the film, which was also attacked by the Catholic establishment (Swann 1994: 190; Ghelli, RC 1957: 154). What the CIA labelled as the Hollywood formula was a way to eliminate 'the negative stereotypes', such as drunks, and bring in the 'characterizations which represented a healthy America', in conjunction with pleasing the Vatican (Saunders 1999: 293). This issue is certainly related to what Kellner (1998: 359) describes in his essay "Hollywood Film and Society" as American ideology promoted by Hollywood films:

The Hollywood genres taught that money and success were important values; that heterosexual romance, marriage, and family were the proper social forms; that the State, police, and legal system were legitimate sources of power and authority; that violence was justified to destroy any threats to the system; and that American values and institutions were basically sound, benevolent, and beneficial to society as a whole.

Family values, law and institutions were the main principles on which American society was based and the same principles that the Catholic establishment was keen to promote. A portrait of a healthy America was the best way to spread Americanism abroad. However, and this will be analysed further on in the chapter, violence and to a certain extent materialism were still two issues the Vatican found it difficult to accept when it came to assessing American film production.

An analysis of the most successful films in the Fifties shows certainly an unconditional interest from Italian audiences towards comedies. Many American comic actors became immediately popular in Italy and stars such as Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton were able to guarantee the success of their films. Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952), for instance, had an extraordinary success in 1952/1953 and in Turin alone the film took over 5 million lire¹⁷. The triumph of comedies lay not only in their escapist power, but at times also on their political role. Lubitsch's anti-Communist *Ninotchka* (1939), very popular amongst Italian audiences, was sent to Italy on the proposal of the United States Department of State after the war and seemed to have helped to change the result of the elections in 1948 when there was a fear of a communist victory (Muscio 1977: 163).

In an article by Callisto Cosulich (1982: 23) in *Paese Sera*, the author reminds the reader that when the film was circulated in Europe during the Cold War, its slogan was not 'Garbo laughs' (as it was in America in 1939)



Figure 5.2 Greta Garbo in a scene from *Ninotchka*, courtesy Corbis.

(see Figure 5.2), but ‘she has chosen liberty, as well’. In his volume (1947: 222) on American cinema, Sergio Sollima, while strongly criticising various aspects of U.S. film production, gave a very positive comment on what the Americans had done for *Ninotchka*, a film appreciated for its satire of Soviet society. The potential influence of an American film on the political elections was not an isolated case in *Ninotchka*. A few years later the distribution of John Ford’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) was interrupted just before the 1952 local elections and the film was released again only after the elections, in the month of June, when normally only B films¹⁸ would be screened. This was in spite of its famous director and the presence of a actor like Henry Fonda, who was very popular in Italy (Quaglietti 1991: 73–74).

While American sophisticated comedies were generally appreciated by Italian audiences, Italian comedies would definitely attract more spectators¹⁹. In 1955 the two Italian films that managed to out-perform the year’s two leading American films at the box office were comedies: Luigi Comenini’s *Pane, amore e gelosia* (Bread, Love and Jealousy) (1954) and Vittorio De Sica’s *L’oro di Napoli* (The Gold of Naples) (1954) (Ferraù, “Tirando le somme”, BI 27/1/1955: 2). This outcome was not replicated in any of the major urban markets in Northern cities, where other movies generated higher returns (Ferraù, “Tirando le somme”, BI 3/3/1955: 2). Their success

showed certainly the appeal of comedies, but also was a sign of the instability of Italian film production. When examining the box office figures for Italian films, it should be borne in mind that the Italian production system was divided into numerous medium and small-sized companies, that were dependent on the financial success of their current film in order to have the pecuniary means to go on to make their next. The De Laurentiis Company, founded in 1957, was one of the few production houses that worked in the American manner, planning its productions several years in advance and placing actors, such as Alberto Sordi or Silvana Mangano, under exclusive contract. The difference in structure that characterised all the other production companies, reflected upon in this extract from Ernesto G. Laura's article (RC 1964: 561–562), draws an important conclusion, which is noteworthy for this chapter:

It can thus be affirmed that in Italy, buying a cinema ticket meant, more than in any other country, voting in favour of a certain type of production: the orientation of the wider public was immediately translated into a 'yes' or 'no' to the development of this tradition, of that theme, of that tendency or even only of the career development of this director or that actor.

For the Italian cinema industry, success or failure at the box office could be crucial to the continuation of a certain genre of film, the career of a star or the career of a specific director. The use of the word 'immediately' emphasises the strength of audience reaction to certain films and the consequences of that reaction (see also Monaco 1958: 9). Moreover, the Italian comedies, despite being commercially very successful within Italy, did not travel abroad very well, if at all, and their continuity was entirely dependent on their financial viability (Ferraù, "Ogni stagione fa storia a se", BI 1955: 3; see also Jeancolas 1992: 141).

The success of Italian comedies, therefore, was very much related to the influential presence of a star and the first comical success of the post-war period (Spinazzola 1986: 83) was linked to the name of Macario, the actor who starred in Carlo Borghesio's trilogy of films (*Come persi la Guerra* [How I Lost the War], *L'eroe della strada*, *Come scopersi l'America*), which Spinazzola (1986: 83) describes like this:

Borghesio's films picked up on a critical level several topics of discussion which were widespread at that time: double-crossing, the black market, relations with the allies-victors, 'the American way of life'.

This initial relationship between the Italians and the Americans and the portrayal of American lifestyle was, though, immediately replaced by a much more regional character, Totò. Totò's films managed to always stay in the annual box office top ten until the end of the 1950s. *Totò cerca casa*

was second after *Catene* in 1949, *Totò a colori* (Totò in Colour) took £774 million, while most of the others (*Totò le Mokò*, *Totò sceicco*, *Totò, Peppino e la malafemmina* [Totò, Peppino and the Hussy], *47 morto che parla*, *Figaro qua*, *Figaro là*, *Napoli milionaria*) had receipts of between £400 million and £500 million²⁰. Although the Neapolitan comedian's films attracted much of their large audiences in reruns, he still out-earned all of his rivals in terms of box office takings. In fact, Alberto Sordi, the Roman comic actor, was more popular than Totò amongst audiences in the first showings, but none of his films were able to generate the £754,200,000 *Totò a colori* (Totò in Color) could for instance in 1952 (Ferraù, "Un mese e mezzo di programmazioni", BI 1956: 3).

Despite a general unfavourable attitude of Catholic critics towards the comic production, regarded as being mediocre²¹ and accused of providing a facile spectacularity, Totò generated a positive response from the Church in a significant article by Giorgio Santarelli (1950: 14–15) published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* in July/August 1950. The Neapolitan actor had become the expression of a certain type of Italian-ness, towards which the audiences showed a great appreciation.

In Totò's films, and in Italian comedies in general, once again the Hollywood formula of the happy ending was adapted to national taste, which Vittorio Gassmann's lines from Mauro Morassi's film *Il successo* (1963) seem to summarise in an extraordinary way:

In American films there is always a chicken leg, in my house half a rotten lemon. (Giacovelli 1990: 11)

The portrait of poverty and of pathetic characters, which were the expression of a country still distressed by the conflict and its financial consequences, was in stark contradiction with the images of abundance coming from America. However, the Hollywood comedies were still used as a guide to decode Italian reality. The adaptation of the structure of American comedies to the experience of current Italian society produced numerous successful films, which had their strength in an 'all Italian cast and plots firmly rooted in an Italian historical and socioeconomic context' (Gunsberg 2005: 65). The soothing resolutions of Italian cinema were offered through the lens of humour and optimism. The half-rotten lemon Vittorio Gassman referred to clearly demonstrates a realistic approach, not in denial of the current Italian economic situation, but interested in proposing an alternative attitude to the one of self-condemnation and gloominess.

However, the soothing resolutions were also coming from one winning element that Hollywood appreciated could virtually guarantee success:

In the November of '43, shortly after the landings, Italian sailors explained to a dazed and astonished reporter for *The Stars and Stripes* that they were barely aware of what was happening politically in our

country (Italy), but that they were fully aware of what was happening to the stars in Hollywood. Clark Gable, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich—to name just a few—also signified for Italians, far more than our own actors, character-symbols, models to refer to in daily behaviour. (Cavallo 1991: 125)

As the American myth had become accessible to everybody, according to Wagstaff (1995: 93) Italians were tranquillized in the evenings ‘with the wholesome American values of Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman and Gary Cooper’, which represented that ‘soothing resolution’ requested by the Government and supported by the Vatican. The top ‘best-sellers’ of American productions were films with well-known actors and actresses, which confirmed the strength and the need for ‘the cult of the star’ in order to guarantee an exceptional profit (Ferraù, “Qualche anticipazione sul consuntivo ’56–’57”, *BI* 29/6/1957: 3). Italian stars had to compete with their foreign counterparts, amongst whom Ingrid Bergman, Greer Garson, Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner, Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, Spencer Tracy and Errol Flynn were the most popular ones, according to a survey carried out in Rome in 1953 (Giannelli 1953: 41–42). Moreover, when possible, the American star would be accompanied by a local celebrity, especially a woman, in order to please the local audiences (Lev 1993: 22). It would not come as a surprise to find that the film critic Giuseppe Marotta in 1959 wrote a portrait for the magazine *L’Europeo* of three popular stars, Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot and Sophia Loren pretending to interview people and gather opinions on these three successful actresses. Despite *La Rivista del Cinematografo*’s accusation of American stars being used to promote ‘scandal, divorce, flightiness, easy money [. . .] corrupt and abnormal life’ (“G.S.Ch.”, *RC* 1942: 77; see also Carancini, *RC* 1956: 18), it was difficult to fight against a star system already established in American cinema, which had become very successful in Italy and had created a wide interest in Hollywood stars’ personal and public lives, constant aspects of the image of stardom (Dyer 1998: 35). It was, therefore, the name of a star which could make a difference in revenue. Sophia Loren, Silvana Mangano, Gina Lollobrigida and Anna Magnani were the actresses who could make a major contribution to a film’s performance at the box office. Vittorio De Sica, Macario, Totò, Alberto Sordi, Marcello Mastroianni, Aldo Fabrizi, Walter Chiari and Renato Rascel were the most successful Italian actors of the time, several of them specialising in those comedies so successful in Italy at the time. This was certainly confirmed by one of the very few cinema surveys carried out in Italy. In 1953 seven hundred people coming out of cinemas in Rome (*first, second and third run*) were interviewed on a variety of cinematic matters (favourite film, favourite star, interest towards Italian cinema, etc.). While the survey revealed that the audiences, when directly asked, expressed their faith in Italian cinema (74%), it was however the names of the stars which

seemed to affect their cinematic choices, proving that the nationality of the films did not constitute a conscious form of attraction and was, especially in the outskirts of the city, more difficult to establish. Therefore, the decision of audiences was often not related to the nationality of a film but more specifically to the presence of a star that would provide a guaranteed success (Giannelli 1953: 28, 40).

AMERICAN AND ITALIAN FILMS RECOMMENDED OR EXCLUDED BY PARISH CINEMAS

In a small advert in *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* are described in this way:

Weekly leaflets examining new films. It represents for Italy, according to the Vigilanti Cura encyclical, 'the national listing of moral classifications of films'. The *Segnalazioni* are sent to subscribers every week in instalments which include facts and figures, a summary of the plot, aesthetic notes and considerable moral evaluation of the films. (RC 1950: 13)

The quotation is interesting not just because it establishes the criteria of the *Segnalazioni*, but also because of the repetition of the word 'moral'. This clarifies the main aim of the meticulous and systematic activity of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. Such a moral classification not only gave general guidelines on the films released, but first and foremost outlined their moral value, this being of great importance for Catholic establishment and audiences. It was a national list that sought to convey precise information with the intention of advising Catholics on what were the best films for them to watch. Nazareno Taddei defined it as 'a pastoral requirement together with a strong missionary means', referring therefore to the educational aim of the *Segnalazioni* and their intention to spread moral values through cinema (RC 1952: 3). In January 1952 the category Not Recommended was introduced and intended for 'films which, whilst not reaching the level of being prohibited, contain negative and dangerous elements' (Galletto, RC 1952: 3). The distinction between Not Recommended and Excluded is further explained by the Catholic film critic Renato Filizola (2004)²². A film was classified as Excluded when 'it theoretically went against Catholic moral principles', and as Not Recommended if 'simply darkened Catholic and moral positions'. This distinction will be difficult to single out when looking at specific films, but it elicits as significant that the Catholic establishment felt the need to broaden the areas of analysis in the film classifications. In an article in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* in 1952, Nazareno Taddei (RC 1952: 4), despite stating that the moral judgements of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico were applied to films without really giving audiences the opportunity to choose for themselves, praised the

introduction of the Not Recommended category. According to the Jesuit it did complement the other categories of the *Segnalazioni*—Recommended, Permitted, Excluded—covering the whole range of viewing choices.

The principles of the *Segnalazioni* had already been expounded in an article by Msgr. Civardi that *La Rivista del Cinematografo* had published in 1940. The *Segnalazioni* acknowledged that the difference between what was allowed to be shown in parish and public cinemas should be taken into account when a moral judgement was expressed and that a film that was considered to be suitable for a public cinema might often be considered inappropriate for the expressly Catholic audience of a parish cinema. As the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* sought to draw attention to what its authors regarded as the capacity of certain films to influence their audiences in a negative manner (the words ‘easily influenced’ were often used) and to ‘damage’ them spiritually, the distinction between parish and public cinemas was made perhaps with the intention of safeguarding small towns’ and villages’ audiences, whose only contact with film was through church screenings. Msgr. Civardi explained in his article (RC 1940: 180) that, as the films considered being suitable for all in a Catholic viewing had to be approved by the Vatican, and as the audience was significantly different from the public cinemas, a clear distinction had to be made.

However, the Producers’ Association (ANICA) soon became aware of the importance of producing morally acceptable films and in 1945 it published its own *Codice per la cinematografia*. This code gave clear guidelines on what was within acceptable limits in films. It was designed exclusively for the ‘spectacular films destined for public showings’ (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 8). It covered areas such as obscenity, sexual relationship, vulgarity, religion and national feelings. Its content had a very Catholic imprint. Suicide and any other disrespect to life needed to be abolished. The sanctity of marriage and the family had to be preserved. A healthy moral education needed to be the first element to be borne in mind when making a film and anything obscene, indecent or vulgar portrayed in as limited a manner as possible (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 5–8). In its section dedicated to the “Necessity for guidelines for the defence of morals in the cinema,” the document reminded the reader of the widespread reception of cinema, as it reached different people and different social classes (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 11). Therefore, producers felt and expressed in this document that their moral role and their responsibility in the choice of topics and in the representation of those topics was extremely delicate (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 12). According to the *Codice* it was necessary to depict virtue, goodness and honesty as appealing values, as well as vice and badness as repulsive ones. This would contribute to the spread of healthy principles of moral conduct so important for the Catholic world (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 13–14). For instance, in the case of sexual relations, in order to respect the sanctity of family and marriage any deviation to this would have to be dealt with cautiously, and divorce, as

not being accepted by some religions, would have to be used as an extreme measure and not treated with thoughtlessness (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 15–16). The principles presented in the document do not seem to differ very much from the guidelines introduced by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. In an article published by *La Rivista del Cinematografo* in 1941 with the title *Norme del Centro Cattolico Cinematografico*, the tone and the content of the document was very similar. The films excluded by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico were films which:

- a) contain and justify, at least implicitly, dogmatic errors and moral sins, such as divorce, duels, suicide, infanticide, illegitimate motherhood etc; b) show in a negative light, even if they do not deride, sacred and religious people, institutions and ceremonies; c) give credit to principles which are anti-social or at least damaging to social harmony; d) contain immoral scenes which are gravely provocative—such as suggestive and prolonged scenes of seduction—or total or almost total nudity, even if shown in silhouette, or passionate dances which emphasize indecent moves, etc. (“Norme del Centro Cattolico Cinematografico”, RC 1941: 7).

When comparing the two documents, it becomes evident that there is a similarity not only in the structure and form but also in the content. The importance of condemning ‘moral sins’, such as suicide, divorce and illegitimate motherhood, was an obvious concern for a Catholic institution but it did not necessarily need to be for an organization such as ANICA. Even, for example, the reference to the danger of dancing is used in the ANICA’s *Codice per la cinematografia* in a very similar way to the Catholic one. Dances which excite or represent sexual actions were prohibited. Dances which exalt indecent moves should be considered obscene (*Codice per la cinematografia* 1945: 7). This will prove to be very significant when looking in detail at the Italian films condemned by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico later on in this chapter.

The trade organisation of Italian production companies felt the need to endorse a certain morality, which should be portrayed in films made by its members. When looking at the totality of Italian film examined by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in the years following the publication of the *Codice per la cinematografia*, one would imagine hence a positive response, considering the resemblance in their attitude towards morality and its application to film production. However, a different result appears. Out of 296 films considered ‘able to be seen in parish cinemas’ in the years 1934–1955 only 53 were Italian, and this number included documentaries produced by the Istituto Luce, religious films and films produced by the Catholic production companies Orbis and Universalis (Gori 1980: 37–42). The situation becomes even more evident in the last years of the 1950s, when according to Msgr. Galletto, Consulente Ecclesiastico of the

Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, the number of films produced in Italy in the years 1956–1960 were higher in the categories Excluded and Not Recommended, with more than 61% of Italian films having a negative moral judgement from the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (Galletto, RC 1961: 3). Eleven years earlier, Galletto himself had addressed the producers on the same issue, asking them to consult the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico before making a film and therefore gaining invaluable advice on how to modify scenes and dialogues that might otherwise disturb the young or the immature (Galletto, RC 1950: 5). Two years later (1952), Giulio Andreotti wrote to Galletto regarding the difficulty of censorship in film. The Christian Democrat politician Andreotti seemed in total agreement with what was Stated in the *Codice per la cinematografia*, especially regarding the necessity of portraying immoral values in a very negative way that could not be misunderstood. In the letter to Msgr. Galletto, published in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (“Censura e censure”, RC 1952: 2–4), Andreotti addressed the way in which some American films dealt for example with the issue of divorce, which despite not showing anything particularly obscene, very often portrayed the two people involved in a positive way, forgetting to underline their indifference towards their children’s future. Andreotti (RC 1952: 3) Stated that, although this did not reflect what happened in the majority of American families, there was still the danger of spreading ‘a sympathetic judgement on divorce, especially in a generalized conception of the greatness and the bounty of America’. Andreotti’s conclusion of this epistle can effectively be taken to have been a summary of the Government’s attitude towards national production: ‘Let us not kill off our production with the intention of moralizing it’, as the alternative would be either to subject a film to scrutiny by the Censorship Commission (even with significant cuts) or decline it and therefore contribute towards the bankruptcy of several production companies. However, despite this awareness by the State to support national cinema, and despite the self-censorship imposed by the producers on their own works (which Argentieri and Cipriani [1961: 1537] define as a sort of self-castration), the outcome of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico on the morality of the films is interesting to analyse. If one could say that the censorship criteria of the Government were very similar to the Catholic ones, and that several authors would decide even before the script was seen by the censorship committee what would be approved or not, the high number of Italian films which are still considered to be Excluded or Not Recommended is astonishing. This becomes more surprising if one bears in mind that several Catholic representatives used to take part to the meetings of the State censorship committee and therefore, ‘their judgement has a certain weight, at least in terms of guidance, for the officials in Andreotti’s office’ (Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1536). Despite encouragement from the ecclesiastic hierarchy to foster collaboration between the production industry and the Catholic

establishment, the films that were made in Italy still did not conform to the criteria suggested by both the Vatican and the Italian State. It is not a surprise, then, to discover the extent to which Catholic and State controls were present in relation to national production, as indicated in this passage from an article by Argentieri and Cipriani (1961: 1552):

A subject is submitted for approval by officials at the Via della Ferratella office. Throughout, officials intervene with 'advice', and then the film has to be submitted for censorship, and the Minister can still block the film. All this before the film is launched. Once it is out, the film is submitted to the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and the Centre's assessment of the morals of the film made known to Churches and to Catholic newspapers. The film can still be withdrawn following a request from a private individual or an official, or can be officially withdrawn by a public official such as a magistrate. There are undoubtedly more obstacles than those we have listed here.

An approach is required that goes beyond an examination of direct intervention of the State or the Catholic reviews of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico when looking at the various forms of Government and Church censorship. There were other 'interferences' that took place at all levels of the distribution. As Brunetta (1979: 314) affirms, it can be easy to focus only on the attitude of the ecclesiastic hierarchy and to forget the enormous local censorship which was activated and organized according to rigid guidelines, which has been already discussed in Chapter 4. However, the official establishments, in this specific case the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, which drew up the *Schede cinematografiche*, can be used as a starting point for assessing the attitude of the Vatican towards national and international productions. Different institutions (parish cinemas, cineforum, etc.) had to decide to adopt or modify with different degrees of control from the ecclesiastic hierarchy. The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, defined by Brunetta (1979: 314) as the ideological barometer, sensitive to the tiniest change in pressure, is a useful source of information regarding the relationship between the Vatican and the national cinema production. From this national institution, it is possible to progress towards that form of local control explained by Brunetta (1978: 433) as 'disciplining signifies channelling, adding and multiplying the local forms of control which constitute ulterior filters regarding national politics'.

When examining individual *Segnalazioni*, it should be kept in mind that the films analysed in this volume are only the ones with the highest box office returns, but also that the most interesting categories—and the ones which will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 6—are the Excluded, Not Recommended and the For All, as they indicated the boundaries of what was acceptable and unacceptable for a Catholic audience.

While Italian films were the highest amongst the Not Recommended and Excluded categories, amongst the most successful U.S. films in the years 1945–1960, the Not Recommended and Excluded categories contained only fifteen films. The main accusations went against scenes where the immorality of the films was expressed often through aspects of sexuality or violence: scanty, the illegitimate co-habitation of two characters, scenes of brutal violence and legitimate gambling, lack of moral principles, numerous situations shown with malicious intent, illicit relationships and lack of religious ideals, sexual and unseemly dances and/or clothes, double entendres, cynicism in the representation of relationships, and satirising religious concepts and issues, the amorality of characters, the way in which adultery and divorce are represented, the amorality of protagonists, exhibitionism, many phrases which are equivocal or in bad taste, frivolity of plot and rough scenes and songs.

It seemed, however, that the main concern for categorising films as Excluded would be sex much more than violence, and sensual behaviour would determine the criteria to decide which films to show on parish circuit. However, when political interest was stronger, the Vatican was prepared to make an exception. The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico appreciated Henry Hathaway's successful *Diplomatic Courier* (1952), defined by Mario Guidorizzi (2001: 49) in his volume *Caccia alla streghe a Hollywood* as 'a transparently anti-communist film'. Despite a reference to violence and some low-cut necklines, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico still put the film in the category Suitable for All, with Appropriate Changes.

However, if 'Hollywood was in the business of selling sex, glamour, and entertainment'—as Gregory D. Black (1994: 57) affirms—the issue of sex was certainly the least appreciated by the Vatican and what Gundle (2007: 107) defines as a 'more open emphasis on sexuality and its indirect, as well as direct, commercialisation' could not have been seen positively by the Catholic establishment. The diffusion of supposed American manners, mores and morals through the medium of Hollywood movies was a concern throughout much of Western Europe. In writing on the free trade of American film in the post-war period, Ian Jarvie (1992) drew attention to how elite social groups in the UK were concerned that American films would change, amongst other things, the British accent. In Italy the concern was of a different kind. There was a widespread belief amongst the Catholic establishment that the loosening of morals was linked to American films (Jarvie 1998: 43). Wanrooij (1991: 205) refers to this concern specifically for issues often associated to America such as divorce, flirting and irreverence toward the husband's authority, which would threaten the institution of the family. The Vatican could certainly not permit this as marriage was a sacrament which could not be broken and any attempt to undermine its authority was seen as a real concern from the Catholic establishment. The letter mentioned before, written in December 1952 by Giulio Andreotti to Msgr. Albino Galletto, not only shows how strong the relationship

between the relaxation of morals and American cinema was supposed to be. Andreotti concluded by asking whether the images of a film or its thesis were more dangerous and by not giving a definite answer. A thorough analysis of the main excluded Italian and American films in Chapter 6 will show that the visual aspects were at times as important as the thesis of the films and the immorality of costumes and provocative female characters were some of the major concerns for the Catholics.

It is interesting here to report what Goffredo Fofi declares in an interview to Tatti Sanguineti in 1992 (and then published in the collection of articles on censorship titled *Italia taglia*) (1999: 81). Remembering his past experience as an altar boy, Fofi referred to the censorship imposed by priests when pre-viewing films before parish screenings following the criteria of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (a practice remarkably portrayed by Giuseppe Tornatore in *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*) and gave this account:

Kisses should never be carnal. Carnal kisses were forbidden. Kisses in Italian and French cinema were always carnal, whereas in American cinema kisses were very rare, always chaste and never French kisses. (quoted in Sanguineti 1999: 81)

This extraordinary Statement points out what probably the real issue was: the concern was very much on the images of a film, more than its thesis, and anything that would go over the limit of what was defined as decent would immediately be banned by the Catholic establishment.

Although the Excluded category of Italian and American films presented similar remarks—immorality of the scenes, the unsuitable dresses and obscene gestures, unacceptable portrayal of concubinage, indecent and sensual dances—the title of an article published by *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, “Let Us Therefore Point the Finger Against Levity, Against Immoral Behaviour and Against the Bad Taste of Certain National Productions” (“A.L.M.”, RC 1950: 14–15)—seems to reinforce a form of definite dissatisfaction towards a certain type of indigenous cinema. However, when analysing the aesthetic comments provided by the *Segnalazioni*, it seems that often not only was the morality of the Italian films questioned but also their artistic value was doubted. *Un turco napoletano* is considered nothing more than a vulgar farce, *Vacanze a Ischia* is only praised for the use of colour, and *Mambo* (see Figure 5.3) is considered a totally mediocre film.

This disapproving attitude towards national cinema should be borne in mind, especially when one considers how some American productions were held by the Catholic establishment to be more worthwhile than national ones. For example, a strong defence of the American comic films in comparison with the Italian ones was made on the basis of the absence in the U.S. comedies of what were considered ‘immoral’ factors:



Figure 5.3 Advertising for Robert Rossen's *Mambo* in *Kinematograph Weekly* (21 April 1955).

[American comic films] were thus created with the sole aim of distracting the spectator, to make him forget the everyday reality, to make him laugh. Such films have no other goal and claim to do nothing other than this. And if, on one hand, we have to note that often a comic film can prompt discussion of weightier topics, the absence of censurable points

in these films (at least in most of them), the attempt to make Americans laugh at their own shortcomings and customs are two factors which we cannot, in this brief examination, find anything other than positive. Positive and instructive because they signify that it is possible to make a comic film which makes money, which entertains the public and makes them laugh, without resorting to elements and aspects which Italian films resort all too often. (Valmarana, RC 1951: 25)

This passage both demonstrates the effect that official Catholic opinions had on Catholic audiences and explains what was better for the general audience. A film which would make them laugh, without any other pretence but also without using any elements which would devalue the morality of the film and which the Vatican would therefore have to condemn, was better. This kind of film was the expression of that form of escapism 'de-ideologized' where the main intent of the film was to make money and entertain its audience. This desire of escapism, which still in 1950 was considered by some critics the main reason for the crisis of Neorealism (Vales, RC 1950: 10), needed therefore to be cleansed of all the impurities which were present in the national production and which unmistakably emerge from the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*. In the category Not Recommended, for example, the elements to which the article referred were pointed out constantly. The word 'licentiousness' appeared in two of the moral comments (*Canzoni di mezzo secolo*; *Altri tempi* [Infidelity]). The others were accused of being generally immoral for supporting criminality (*L'oro di Napoli* [The Gold of Naples]), for representing indecent scenes (*Ragazze da marito*; *Siamo uomini o caporali* [Are We Men or Corporals?]; *La donna più bella del mondo* [The Most Beautiful Woman in the World]; *Il più comico spettacolo del mondo* [Funniest Show on Earth]; *Belle ma povere*; *La diga sul Pacifico* [This Angry Age]) as well as an indirect praise of divorce (*Vacanze d'inverno*) and an illicit relationship not openly condemned (*Stazione Termini* [Indiscretion]). The Adult with Appropriate Changes category still presented similar problems and the films included in it were still charged with indecent scenes, unacceptable issues, such as suicide and concubinage, as well as a tolerant attitude towards dishonesty and verbal vulgarity.

While, on one hand, it is true that such apprehension seemed to be felt particularly by the Catholic establishment, one should not believe what that as soon as a film stood out for its open-mindedness, it became forbidden to go and see it, as Filizzola (2002) States. For example, films listed as For All with Appropriate Changes or For Adult were still appreciated and shown in the parish circuit, despite a strict request from the Catholic establishment to screen only films For All and in exceptional circumstances, those For Adult with the Appropriate Changes²³. However, when looking at the most successful Italian productions in the years 1934–1955 in those two categories, only three films were classified For All, out of forty-six, which was the total together with the other categories (Excluded,

Not Recommended, For Adult with Appropriate Changes, For Adult). This can be taken to be quite a small number, especially in view of the self-censorship producers would have exercised after the introduction of the *Codice per la cinematografia* in 1945. The small category For All includes the scientific documentary *Sesto continente* (The Sixth Continent) and two films of the series Don Camillo, the original *Don Camillo* and *Il ritorno di Don Camillo* (The Return of Don Camillo), while the third film of the same series, *Don Camillo e l'onorevole Peppone*, was classified For Adult because combining the sacred and the profane (as Don Camillo does in the conversations with Christ) could sow confusion amongst the young.

CATHOLICISM AND NEOREALISM

While the category For Adult presents similar remarks on the indecency of scenes as the main reason to recommend the films to a mature audience as well as again the absence of moral brakes, it also introduces an important comment on Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (Rome Open City) (1945), which gives a clear indication of the Vatican's response to Italian Neorealism at that specific time. The film was considered to be generally positive for the praise of heroic sacrifice of the protagonists and their optimum interpretation, as well as for the rhythm of the narrative, which often reached perfection. Yet, it was still not suitable for all because of the 'excessively realistic representation of certain scenes' (1945: 122). Another Rossellini film, *Europa '51* (The Greatest Love) (1952), appears amongst the For Adult with Appropriate Changes category, and is praised for the 'accusation against modern society, unable to resolve social problems with the application of evangelical principles' but considered to be presenting the Christian principles in a doubtful way, and therefore only suitable for adults with full moral maturity (XXXII/36 1952: 282). The diversity of these comments raises the issue of the attitude of the Vatican towards Neorealist films, which is of relevance in this context not only as part of a general disregard towards national production but also as an instance of how the attitude of the Vatican changed radically with regard to Neorealist films. During 1947 and 1948, the Catholic attack against Neorealism was very strong. This attitude was afterwards defined by Bernardini as a historical error²⁴. This strong criticism of Neorealism changed after the April 1948 Italian general elections and the subsequent political stability that was established by the Christian Democrat Government. Catholic intellectuals, such as Mario Verdone or Felix Morlion, as well as Catholic writers such as Diego Fabbri and Turi Vasile, started re-assessing this important aspect of Italian cinema. In the early 1950s a new approach towards some of the most important representative Neorealist films emerged. Italian Neorealism was then passing through its final stages and there was no longer a need for Catholic representatives to counter its ideology so the time

for a different analysis of some of the Neorealist films seemed to emerge (Brunetta 1979: 309). That is why articles such as Rondi's "Neorealismo, arte cristiana" (RC 1954: 12–13), Covi's "È possibile un neorealismo cristiano?" (RC 1955: 5–6), Morlion's "Presupposti cristiani nel neorealismo italiano" (Sequenze 1950: 27) and "Crisi e prospettive del neorealismo cinematografico" (Bianco e Nero 1949: 3–10), Fabbri's "Neorealismo italiano segno di contraddizione" (RC 1949:10–12) and "Le basi filosofiche del neorealismo cinematografico italiano" (Bianco e Nero, IX 4, Giugno 1948) are published in various Catholic and non-Catholic journals. In these pieces, the movement was assessed with regard to Christian content (Rondi 1954: 12), its faith in God (Covi 1955: 6) and its detachment from that laicism that was condemned by Catholic establishment (Galletto, "Il cinema ha paura di Cristo?", RC 1949: 6). However, there were still expressions of a certain degree of insecurity towards a form of art the aim of which 'wanted to demolish but not to re-construct, and in which the poverty which was photographed and represented was not a document meant to cure but a placard meant to upset' ("Socialità e moralità del cinema italiano", RC 1954: 2). This sort of dichotomy between some Catholic representatives, who could read Christian values in some Neorealist films, and others, who still felt that the Neorealist school would depict a country abandoned by God ("Socialità e moralità del cinema italiano", RC 1954: 3), is however a major issue that does not seem to have been solved. The filmmaker Carlo Lizzani expresses this dichotomy as a consequence of Italian Catholics not understanding the Christian aspects of Neorealism and ending up labelling it as communist. As a result Neorealism 'was a gift to the Left of a cinema that in real terms was not of the Left' (quoted in Chinnici 2003: 109).

If one of the aims of this chapter was to explore how American ideology was expressed in American films exported to Italy in the post-war period and comprehend how it corresponded to the ideology also promoted by the Vatican, the hostile reaction of the Vatican to certain specific American films sheds an interesting light on the difficulty of the Catholic Church to work with certain aspects of cinema. However, when looking at the most successful American and Italian films shown in Italy between 1945 and 1960, it was crucial to see how the reception of certain American films helped influence contemporary Italian life by offering those soothing resolutions, which the Italian Government could not find in Italian Neorealism. This seemed very similar to the position of the Vatican, which was able to direct film production and distribution by the power of its *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*. If sex was certainly the issue least appreciated by the Vatican in American films, there were however other conflicting aspects of society, such as divorce and any threats to the institution of the family, which the Vatican feared could be spread through cinema. The examination of a few case studies in the following chapter will offer an interesting indication of the role of American cinema in Italian society, the shaping of Italian film industry and the values it represented, and the consequent reaction of the Catholic establishment.

6 Gender Roles, the Church and the Allure of Modernity in American and Italian Films

The aim of this chapter is to examine the most successful Italian and American films, in terms of box office intakes, during the period 1945–1960 (according to figures from the *Borsa Film*¹). These were either recommended by the Vatican through the *Segnalazioni* of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, or not approved by it and therefore excluded from the circuit of parish cinemas.

The most recommended and successful Italian films in the years 1945–1960 here analysed are: Julien Duvivier's *Don Camillo* (1952), which earned '£1.5 billion box-office takings and a first place position in the 1951–52 film charts, with Lattuada's *Anna* in the second position with slightly lower takings of 500 million' (Spinazzola 1985: 197); *Il ritorno di Don Camillo* (The Return of Don Camillo) (1953), again directed by Duvivier, with a box office take of over £900 million and the third place in the chart (Spinazzola 1985: 200); and Ladislao Vajda's *Marcellino pane e vino* (Marcelino pan y vino) (1955)². The two American films, which are amongst the most successful and the most recommended by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico—and therefore analysed here—are: George Cukor's *Holiday* (1938) and John Huston's *The African Queen* (1951).

This chapter will also look at the Italian and American films not recommended by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, and therefore included either in the categories Excluded or Not Recommended. These were *La donna più bella del mondo* (The Most Beautiful Woman in the World) (1956) by Robert Z. Leonard, De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli* (The Gold of Naples) (1954) and *Stazione Termini* (Indiscretion) (1953), Mario Mattoli's *Un turco napoletano* (1953), Robert Rossen's *Mambo* (1955)³, Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959), George Sidney's *Pal Joey* (1957) and Howard Hawks' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953). *Pal Joey* was classified amongst the films which in the season 1957/1958 grossed over £100 million (BI 21/6/1958: 2), *Some Like It Hot* was in 1959 amongst the 'most popular films of the larger cities' (BI 24/12/1959: 2) while *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was one of the most successful films in Milan in the season 1953–1954 (BI 5/2/1954: 1). I have studied all the American films mentioned above in the Italian version to take into consideration aspects of translation.

As Hollywood cinema was extremely successful in Italy, Brunetta (1994: 142) affirms that 'there was even an indirect attempt to offer an Italian product which could function as a surrogate for the American cinema'. When studying the Italian films mentioned above, reference will be made to their American counterparts, in order to identify common themes and elements present in both groups of films and how different issues were interpreted by the Roman Catholic establishment. Family and the home, Italian landscape, music, sport and young people are what Brunetta (1996: 20) defines as 'the bonding factors which enable us to envisage the new Italian persona'. In the Italian films mentioned above, these elements are not only often present, but become the expression of those values that the Church wanted either to promote or to hinder. The identification of those values with the new identity Italy was trying to rebuild in the wake of the Fascist regime is a clear indication of the role of certain aspects of society, and therefore are important to analyse. This chapter will refer to the first aspect (family and the home) identified by Brunetta as one of the main themes for an in-depth analysis of the films but also to understand what were the main issues contested or approved by the Catholic establishment.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN, EMANCIPATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF NON-DOMESTICITY

When discussing family and home, the representation of the woman—as a fundamental point of reference in the family setting—is certainly the first aspect to consider, especially in relation to what the Vatican believed the role of woman was: 'the subordinate one of mother and husband's help-mate, with its attendant virtues of modesty, submission and sacrifice' (Allum 1990: 83). This position, which did not certainly differ from the Fascist ideology interested in 'confining women within the domestic space' (Torriglia 2002: 9; see also Grignaffini 2002: 241), defined by family life and motherhood, was not in agreement with the female roles played by Marilyn Monroe in the American films and by Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren and Silvana Mangano in the Italian ones.

Two main reasons in the *Segnalazioni* determine the exclusion of certain films from being viewed: sex and violence, which were considered the main hindrances in a film, together with of course lack of morality and of religious ideals. In an article in *L'Unità*, Mario Alicata (1961), responsible for cultural activities in the Communist Party, defined this 'obsession for sex' as an inflated concern expressed by the Catholic establishment towards what they perceived as the 'spreading of a pathological and uncontrollable eroticism'. Alicata's claim is extremely poignant because, from the analysis of both the American and the Italian films, a reflection of his allegation emerges. Alicata accused the Catholics of identifying as corruption 'the Italian masses' attainment of a mentality free from hypocritical and

immoral taboos'. This, in some ways, explained even the contradictory positions towards films such as *La dolce vita*, which not just Alicata, but even members of the Catholic community, praised for its Catholic ideology. What Alicata defined as an ideological form of terrorism coming from the Catholic establishment on sexual issues is quite evident in the comments of the *Segnalazioni*.

The encyclical *Vigilanti cura* issued by Pope Pius XI in 1936 started by praising the work done in America by the Legion of Decency. It referred to the morality of film, Stated the importance of making the cinema 'moral, moralising, educator' and complimented the Legion for the success that it had achieved. The 1936 encyclical also declared unequivocally the role that the Catholic press was expected to pursue in order to guide Catholics towards the 'right films' to watch (*Vigilanti cura* 1936: 7). The analysis of the individual films will confirm how any attempt to undermine the family authority was seen as a real concern from the Catholic establishment and will emphasise further the main relationship between immorality of costumes and provocative female characters.

When looking at the stars of the American films, both *Some Like It Hot* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* have protagonists who were played by Marilyn Monroe. She was also the main actress in Henry Hathaway's *Niagara* (1953) and Billy Wilder's *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), both included in the Not Recommended category. Marilyn Monroe was extremely popular in Italy. By the mid-Fifties she was already on the covers of many popular Italian magazines, such as *Epoca* and *L'Europeo* (Gundle 1995: 149). The identification of Marilyn Monroe with sexuality (Dyer 1986: 18) is evident in the two movies through several aspects of mise-en-scène and cinematography. However, the paradox she embodied concerned whether her sexuality was innocent or promiscuous. The Catholic establishment had no doubts. All the tight and diaphanous costumes she wore in *Some Like It Hot* were defined by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's *Segnalazioni* as 'too scanty' (XLVI/15 1959: 159), one of the aspects which classified the film as 'morally unacceptable' (XLVI/15 1959: 159). It is interesting to notice, when looking at *Some Like It Hot*, the position taken by the reviewer on the pro-Government newspaper *Il Tempo* in relation to the recommendations of the Vatican. The review, while defining the sense of humour as clever and malicious, still condemns the immorality of the film (Rondi 1959).

In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, one of Marilyn Monroe's first successes, the more demure but yet clearly sexualised costumes were still defined by the *Segnalazioni* as often not suitable, together with a frivolous plot and offensive songs (Vol.XXXV—Disp. 2 1954: 16).

Camera movements—such as the 'side-on tits and arse positioning' analysed by Dyer (1986: 20)—also helped to consolidate the image of the sexually empowered woman she always plays in her films, a category of women that re-emerges after a total absence in the 1940s (May 2000: 282).

The ability to seduce men to her advantage, creating a threat to the social order, corresponds to a certain extent to what Marilyn Monroe's characters seek to do in the films that I analyse here. She is blond, she corresponds to the Italian definition of 'maggiorate fisiche' ('physically endowed': a term adopted in the Fifties for actresses such as Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, whose films were strongly attacked by the Catholic establishment) and she becomes the embodiment of sexuality criticised by the Church. What might be alarming for the Catholic establishment is that the desirability of Marilyn Monroe's characters could have been used to legitimate sexuality and deprive sex of its sense of guilt. It is that 'whore-virgin dichotomy' Molly Haskell refers to when discussing the 'dialectical caricature of the "sexpot" and the "nice girl"' (Haskell 1973: xiii). The actress's power lay in her vulnerability and in her innocent sexuality, which enable her to exert control over those men who were susceptible to them. What became even more extraordinary was the interface of innocence and stupidity that Monroe seemed to present in her films. In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, not only does Lorelei come up with questions such as 'Is this the way for Europe in France?', but also makes several grammatical errors, which are part of a character defined by herself in the same film as someone who becomes intelligent only when she needs it. This certainly contradicts Haskell's belief that the roles played by Monroe, as well as Elizabeth Taylor and Jane Russell, were all 'incapable of an intelligent thought' (Haskell 1973: xiii) and reinforce the intention and premeditation of Monroe's characters, whose mixture of dumbness, apparent defencelessness and sexuality contribute to controlling the male protagonists in her films. The issue of women reduced to pure objectified bodies—discussed by Maureen Turim (1990) in her analysis of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*—was disapproved by the Catholic Church not certainly for the final extolling of heterosexual monogamy (Turim 1990: 106). The end of the film, in fact, where the two female protagonists get married and their role of wife is visually legitimated by the use of what Turim (1984) calls the 'sweetheart' wedding dress is still not enough to gain the Vatican's approval. The two characters have chosen romance rather than a career in the show business and therefore have clearly preferred the domestic sphere to the public one. However, this does not free them from their 'established guilt' that, according to Laura Mulvey (1975), women embody.

When Robert J. Corber (2006: 6) refers to Joan Crawford's masculinisation as 'an example of the bad things that supposedly befall women when they leave the domestic sphere and enter the workforce', he refers to that post-war re-organisation of economy which had affected Italy as well and against which the Vatican was strongly fighting. Betty Friedan's 'traditional division between virgin and whore' expressed in the opposition between 'housewife versus career woman' (in Chaudhuri 2006: 17) is also to a certain extent the division between Catholic and non-Catholic women. However, after helping in the productive system during the war, women found it

difficult to return to their roles of mothers and wives. Their working experience had 'left permanent traces in their self-perception', while their right to vote, introduced in 1946, had given them a new 'political force' (Torriglia 2002: 60). Therefore, Marilyn Monroe's sexual and feminine portrayal of a working woman was even more controversial and alarming for a Catholic establishment which was anxiously seeking re-domestication of women. The issue would become even more distressing when the job women were involved in entailed using the female body for visual pleasure.

One of the aspects which concerned the Catholic establishment, in fact, was the danger of displaying the female body for public show. Richard Maltby writing about the film's opening scene thinks that 'the primary source of audience enjoyment in the scene is the pleasure we gain from watching Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell perform for an off screen audience; our reward is spectacular, rather than narrational' (Maltby 1995: 418). This visual aspect may not in itself constitute an issue for the Catholic Church. However, in the specific case of Marilyn Monroe, it would lead to legitimating the idea of taking pleasure by watching a sexual icon, whose glamorous and provocative costumes would also complement attention from a narrative, defined by the *Segnalazioni* as frivolous (Vol. XXXV—Disp. 2 1954: 16).

The immorality of the costumes and the identification of female body as spectacle was an issue also in the third and last banned film, *Pal Joey*. The movie is set in a nightclub and therefore included chorus girls, who were often shown wearing revealing outfits, which appealed to the male audience of the club. This element was reinforced by the Statement of one of the nightclubs' managers: 'Do you know what people want? Legs!'. This eroticisation of women stood in contrast to the role played by the main two actresses of the film: the sophisticated Rita Hayworth, whose sober costumes were intended to deflect from her own past as a chorus girl; and the austere Kim Novak, one of the chorus girls, whose poor social background is shown by her sombre outfits, worn outside the nightclub. Again in this film, as it had happened for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, the visual aspects of the film, rather than its narrative, are condemned. The film is accused of presenting 'numerous scanty costumes' (XLIII/12 1958: 120), and Novak's character's uneasiness about her profession and about her illegitimate relationship with Frank Sinatra is still not enough for the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico to judge the film differently. Linda (Kim Novak), in fact, is still a cabaret star, and therefore not moral enough to be approved by the Vatican. She is still somehow using her femininity to attract a male audience and encouraging their voyeurism.

Moreover, in *Pal Joey*, as well as in Monroe's films, the characters were in search of raised social status gained through marriage into higher social classes. Money seemed to represent the main asset in a man. Lorelei Lee in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is 'a manipulative gold-digger' (Maltby 1995: 386) who affirmed that 'falling in love with a rich man is as easy as doing

it with a poor one', and who was defined by her best friend as someone so interested in money that for her 'money is her main hobby'. Sugar in *Some Like It Hot* dreams of meeting a man rich enough to have 'a yacht, his private train and his personal toothpaste'. In *Pal Joey*, Vera Simpson (Rita Hayworth), despite becoming a sophisticated, millionairess widow, whose charitable activities could be praised, still found herself unable to forget her past as a chorus girl. Despite the fact that women's desire to improve their social conditions rather than to raise big families was a general trend in post-war Italy, this was certainly not what the Church was eager to promote. Women had to return to their family values and forget that social mobility guaranteed by work or marriage to a rich man (Piccone Stella 1991: 270–274; Haskell 1973: 308). This is certainly very different—for instance—from what was Howard Hawks' idea for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*:

It was simply a joke. In other films, you have two men who go out and try to find pretty girls for fun. We imagined the opposite and took two girls who go out and find a few men for fun: a perfectly modern story; it pleased me a lot; it was funny. (Becker, Truffaut and Rivette 1956:14)

This modern attitude of empowered and autonomous women was expressed by Hawks with heroines who show their independence through their positive forcefulness (Chaudhuri 2006: 28). Marilyn Monroe was in fact not only the symbol of heterosexual availability but also 'the icon of non-domesticity' which certainly collided with the image of woman publicised by the Catholic Church and supported by Catholic principles (Cohen 1998: 261).

The same issue is raised by the actresses in three of the Italian films included in the category Not Recommended or Excluded by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico—Gina Lollobrigida (*La donna più bella del mondo*), Silvana Mangano (*Mambo*) and Sophia Loren (*L'oro di Napoli*). Loren and Lollobrigida were, in fact, both the expression of a different kind of woman from the idealised female figures promoted by the Vatican and represented that 'sexualised' beauty that 'was the hallmark of the United States', now adapted in Italy (Gundle 2007: 108). Lollobrigida was both the first expression of the national star-system (see Figure 6.1) and the actress for whom Blasetti invented the word 'maggiorata' ('physically endowed') (Brunetta 1991: 103), while Loren had a similar level of international success, despite keeping an exquisitely regional charm, which was utilised in *L'oro di Napoli* (Grignaffini in Brunetta 1996: 384).

In the *Segnalazioni* by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, Loren's episode of De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli*, even though the plot was wrongly summarised leading to a reduction in the guilt of the main protagonist, was condemned. In it the actress plays the adulterous wife of a pizza maker, which in the plot becomes the daughter. Despite this mistake, the film is still



Figure 6.1 Gina Lollobrigida: celebrity friend of Marilyn Monroe, courtesy Corbis.

negatively criticised and included in the Not Recommended category for the costumes and the protagonist's behaviour (XXXVI—Disp. 29 1954: 231), criticisms which were not very dissimilar from inappropriate costumes and the indecent scenes attributed to *La donna più bella del mondo* (XXXIX/23 1956: 179) and the scanty costumes of *Mambo* (XXXVII/8 1955: 64). The three actresses (Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren and Silvana Mangano) are presented once again—as it had happened in the movies of Marilyn Monroe—as the object of male desire and the expression of a sexuality so feared by the Church. What was even more dangerous in the Italian films was that the actresses' beauty was not constructed—as in the case of many Hollywood stars—but somehow associated with 'a certain raw earthiness that

seemed natural and unspoilt' and towards which Italians could easily relate (Gundle 2007: 142; 154). Loren, like Lollobrigida and Mangano, is not blond as Marilyn Monroe was, and their typically Mediterranean beauty is closer to Italian women than Marilyn would ever be. It was not a coincidence that neither of them ever played the role of an American woman, as 'the ethnic difference remained fundamental' and their physical appearance and their gestures represented a way to keep the international star-system local, making it more possible for Italians to relate to it (Gundle 2007: 162). Also, the three Italian actresses had all emerged from beauty contests, where the silent promise to become an actress was always implied in the final prize and their physical appearance—the focus of which had shifted from face to body—was what had led them into the film industry (Farassino 1989: 141; Buckley 2000: 528; Gundle 2007: 158). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to notice in the film analysed here how once again *mise-en-scène* and cinematography are used to highlight that sexuality by use of costumes tightly fitted to their voluptuous bodies and in conjunction with camera movements that emphasised curves and body parts, as had happened with Marilyn Monroe's films. In the opening scene of *Pizze a credito* (Sophia Loren's episode of *L'oro di Napoli*), Loren is introduced to the audience wearing a sexy tight white blouse while the camera lingers on her kissing her screen lover, while in the final scene she is followed from behind by the camera, showing her curvaceousness amongst groups of men. The camera often isolates—as it had done in Monroe's films—body parts in close-ups so that she becomes the erotic spectacle for the male gaze.

Gina Lollobrigida's costumes in Leonard's *La donna più bella del mondo* resonates the outfits that Marilyn Monroe tended to wear on-screen, and her character is in many ways similar to the ones played by the American star in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) and *Some Like It Hot* (1959) (see Figure 6.2).

Lollobrigida is the singer Lina Cavalieri, who becomes very successful performing in cabaret and dancing. Dancing, which is often associated with sexuality and animal instincts (Gundle 2007: 127) and is openly condemned by the Vatican, is replaced by the singing. Her persona in Leonard's film is the embodiment of a type of sexuality, which resembles Marilyn Monroe's characters. Her sexuality is used in an inoffensive and innocent way (Buckley 2000: 529) and is here described by Grignaffini:

A personality which uses sexuality not as a dangerous weapon, but encased behind a charming innocence; whose liveliness is pure and harmonious, but whose heart is driven by an overflowing sense of irrepressible energy, which is challenged by a sociality confined to family life. [. . .] These characters are immediately recognisable and identifiable as genuine stereotypes. (Grignaffini 1996: 384)

This harmless sexuality (Wood in Sieglohr 2000: 157), in which one can easily identify not only Gina Lollobrigida and Marilyn Monroe, but also



Figure 6.2 Gina Lollobrigida as glamorous and regal Lina Cavalieri in *La donna più bella del mondo*.

Silvana Mangano and Sophia Loren, is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the films for the Catholic establishment. However, the physical appearance and the costumes of Lina Cavalieri and of Giovanna Blasetti seem to be the only expression of that immorality which the Church condemned in Marilyn Monroe's *Some Like It Hot* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Lina Cavalieri, in fact, is a woman defined by a character in the film with 'only one imperfection: she is too honest'. Her honesty is not, however, praised in the *Segnalazioni* of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, while what



Figure 6.3 Silvana Mangano's sensual dance in *Mambo*, courtesy Corbis.

is said is that the film 'takes place in an immoral and frivolous environment', which is the entertainment world, that same corrupted world from which her mother Olympia wants to protect her and where *Pal Joey* (1957), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) and *Some Like It Hot* (1959) all take place. Giovanna Blasetti in *Mambo* (1955) belongs to the same world. She is a simple girl, who struggles to survive by working as a shop assistant and then becomes a dancer (see Figure 6.3). Dancing brings her success, money

and power over the men who had in the past made her suffer. As Giovanna says, 'I had arrived, I had earned my money and they were on their knees'.

However, it is the use of her power that the *Segnalazioni* condemned and defined as being immoral (XXXVII/8 1955: 64). The positive feelings, which emerge in the ending of the film, do not manage—according to the *Segnalazioni*—to balance the negative elements of the story. Giovanna is still a negative character, an overly-strong woman who works, is independent and uses her sexuality in order to win her male partners.

The three Italian stars not only embodied a form of sexuality that the Vatican dreaded, they also challenged the image of womanhood that the Catholic Church was eager to restore in post-war Italy: a woman totally dedicated to her children (Caldwell in Sieglöhr 2000: 131). It is not a coincidence that the only episode of *L'oro di Napoli* praised by an article in *La Rivista del Cinematografo* was called *Il funeralino* (Ojetti, RC 1955: 11–12), which was cut from the film because of the length of its final version. Ojetti considered it to be 'an inspiring interpretation of all human feelings' (RC 1955: 11), as it showed the suffering of a mother for the loss of her son. As motherhood is 'the most popular visual image of femininity in Catholicism' and, for instance, the main female protagonists of one of 1950s Italian most successful genres, melodrama, were all mothers, the total lack of maternal feelings in all the Italian—as well as American—banned films here analysed raises another issue in relation to Catholic ideology (Günsberg 2005: 29; Caldwell 2006: 225). Fertility and reproduction, which define the primary function of Catholic women, establishing their femininity and determine their role in society, are completely missing in the films studied here. Marilyn Monroe's characters, as well as Gina Lollobrigida's, Silvana Mangano's and Sophia Loren's, are much more interested in material consumption than in motherhood. Autonomy, social mobility and status are available to them through work outside the home or marriage to a rich man, both solutions which do not entail maternity and are associated with dishonour by the Church. As previously mentioned regarding the American films, the Italian ones banned by the Church also present all female characters who want to assert their new role in society and free themselves from their constrained family lives and use work as a way of gaining independence.

For instance, Loren's character in *L'oro di Napoli*—as well as Mangano's character in *Mambo* (1955)—is a strong woman who works and is autonomous. However, while the actress portrays an image which challenges traditional sexual roles, in the private sphere maternity, domesticity and 'normality' were still widely publicised in relation to film stars (see Figure 6.4). The press coverage of Lollobrigida's pregnancy and Alida Valli's motherhood, for instance, was a way of depicting these stars as middle-class mothers, with concerns similar to any other woman and in contrast to what was common in Hollywood as Buckley (2006: 41) affirms:

At that time the motherhood of major Hollywood stars was not usually highlighted for fear that desirability and mystique would be shattered.



Figure 6.4 Gina Lollobrigida: domestic goddess, courtesy Corbis.

In Italy the stars were not cloaked in the same aura of artificial glamour; their appeal rested at least in part on their everyday qualities and the fact that they were ordinary. (See also Cicognetti and Servetti 1996)

Female freedom as a challenge to traditional female values was even more evident in the other film by Vittorio De Sica, which was considered to be in the category of the Not Recommended, *Stazione Termini* (1953). De Sica's film, despite having an international cast (Jennifer Jones and Montgomery

Clift), still has a very Italian setting 'so as not to lose touch with the reality of his country, without which [the director] would undoubtedly be unable to express himself' (Lizzani 1992: 132–133; see also Chiarini 1954: 107). In this film, while Giovanni (Montgomery Clift) says that he prefers to consider himself Italian 'because in Italy the men count for more', Jennifer Jones' character, Maria, his American lover, is accused by Giovanni of being too modern and free: 'You American women are a little too emancipated', referring to a change in habits, which Campari notes in his analysis:

The reference to America also means, particularly in the films of the 1950's, a series of changes in the national habits which was becoming progressively apparent. This is especially so in the representation of female protagonists. (Campari 1996: 212)

The American woman, who leaves her husband in the United States and spends time by herself in Italy, is using her independence for an immoral purpose. In her letter to Giovanni, Maria says that 'beside you I have forgotten everything, my husband, my conscience, even my daughter'. In the end of the film Maria leaves her lover in order to return to her family and therefore—as Anna Maria Torriglia (2002: 101) affirms—she is forced to 'submit to her marital and motherly duties: in fact it strives to reinscribe her libido within the institutionalised boundaries of marriage'. Despite this, the film is still considered to be immoral as the decision is taken because of the concern for a scandal and Maria still promises Giovanni to love him, 'failing her duty'.

Greater freedom in sexual behaviour and challenges to Catholicism in terms of a different approach to the depiction of family life and maternity were the main issues which the Vatican had to tackle when dealing with the national film industry. The ideal film according to the Catholic Church should represent a woman 'dedicated to the home and its intimacy, because she knows that is where her entire happiness lies' (Valli 1999: 125). By reaffirming that the role of women was to look after their family, whose primacy in Italian society had to be preserved, the Vatican would also fight against that obsession for sex, which too many female characters would display in many popular Italian films of the 1950s, where 'female identity increasingly assumed a sexualized and eroticized bodily signification'⁴.

The positive reception of the ecclesiastic establishment towards films such as *Holiday* and *The African Queen* do not come as a surprise when comparing the depiction of the female characters in these two films with what was mentioned above regarding the films banned by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. Katharine Hepburn's roles are in fact very different from any of Marilyn Monroe's characters.

Holiday's protagonist is Linda (Katherine Hepburn), a millionaire's daughter who falls in love with Johnny Case (Cary Grant), her sister Julia's (Doris Nolan) fiancé. Despite the fact that two female characters 'are trapped by gender in the narrative', as 'neither has access to patriarchal

power' and 'neither can conceive of a way to fulfil her ambitions of dreams without a man' (Helford 2007: 101), the two sisters present a very different way to engage with their male partners. Julia is interested in men in order to achieve a high standard of life, social status and economic security, values strongly regarded also by Zucchero Kandiski (Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot*) and Lorelei Lee (Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*). For Linda, however, her wealth is a burden and she isolates herself in a dream world, almost denying her financial security. Linda likes Johnny specifically because he has not been infected by 'a respect for wealth' and she satirically reminds him that 'money is our God'. This identification of money with God is obviously a disparagement she makes of her family life but is also the criterion on which Marilyn Monroe's characters base their existence. Linda presents, therefore, the image of a different kind of woman. She does not need to exploit her femininity in order to win a man, but 'adopts male characteristics in order to enjoy male prerogatives' (Haskell quoted in Dyer 1998: 54). Hepburn's portrayal of Linda could not have been more different from Monroe's characters. Her interest in men comes purely from a companionship point of view, and she neither uses nor shows her sexuality in order to win her male partner. Linda bonds with men, using her body for acrobatic shows with Cary Grant rather than to try to attract sexually his attention (see Figure 6.5). This is in contrast with the *super-sexy image* imposed by the system on Marilyn Monroe.

Linda's attitude, wiping out any sexual reference, almost reinforces a sense of masculinity in her physical attributes and behaviour. She is extremely thin, without any curves, and her sexless costumes not only flatten her femininity but at times also make her look slightly masculine. Wide coats, long shapeless skirts, manly shoes and modest blouses highlight Linda's face, detracting attention from a body completely hidden by clothes. Costumes are clearly representative of the female characters' lives and this applies to Julia as much as to Linda. When Julia gets rid of Johnny, who has become a hindrance to her pursuit of the high life, she is dressed in a black chiffon dress with a wide low cut, not very different from the black transparent and very sensual dress Marilyn Monroe wears in the final scene of *Some Like It Hot*. On the contrary, her sister Linda, whose outfit is a wide masculine coat, which completely covers her body, is the character who refuses economic stability and social status in order to gain sincere love.

If *Holiday* had shown a desexualisation of the main female character, *The African Queen* is an attempt to present an even chaster image of Katharine Hepburn (see Figure 6.6). In *The African Queen* she plays Rosa, who is foremost the sister of a missionary. She is dependent on her brother, cinematically shown by her positioning almost always by his side or behind him and also from the choice of her pale and dowdy costumes which are appropriate to her role as the minister's sister. She is not presented at all as a sexual character. Her brother defined her as



Figure 6.5 Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant during rehearsal for the acrobatic sequence of *Holiday*, courtesy Corbis.

being ‘not beautiful’, admitting that only God found her a place by his side and her prudish clothes do not attract the attention of the audience to her body.

Even when she is forced to undress herself, the camera leaves her completely out of shot, depriving her of any possible sexual allusion. Rose’s character is a strong woman with solid moral values and a determined personality. Her spiritual and religious beliefs are constant in the film and



Figure 6.6 Katharine Hepburn as virtuous and buttoned-up Rosa Sayer in *The African Queen*, courtesy Corbis.

her moral qualities are certainly the antithesis of the values embodied by Marilyn Monroe's characters in the two films analysed here.

The presence of spiritual and religious beliefs, as well as family values in *Holiday* as much as in *The African Queen*, and a total or partial absence of them in *Some Like It Hot*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Pal Joey*, are certainly a decisive factor in classifying these American films as either For All or Excluded and Not Recommended. *Holiday* and *The African Queen* promoted such values. Family principles were clearly endorsed in *Holiday*

by all of the characters portrayed. In fact, despite the fact that Edward Seton, father of the bride, seems mainly interested in his future son-in-law's social background, he States that 'getting married is an important step for a woman' and finally accepts that his daughter Julia wishes to marry someone from a different social status. The family's internal conflicts seem to be partially forgotten when the happiness of one daughter is discussed; and Linda's concern about her sister's future is shown by her effort in keeping the couple together and by her joy of discovering that the father has finally given his approval. When she finds out her father has done so she exclaims 'Mum would be very proud of this!', referring to the only family member not present to the important event.

In *The African Queen*, the same family values are expressed by the close relationship between Rosa and her brother, by the decision of Charlie and Rosa to make their relationship legal by getting married just before they are executed and by their reference to their wish to have children. Charlie States: 'We will not be short of stories to tell our grandchildren'.

The family values present in both films are supported by a strong Christianity. In *Holiday* the first conversation about Julia's wedding takes place in church, which the family (even the alcoholic son) regularly attend, while in *The African Queen* the opening scene takes place in the Methodist church that has been built in the African village, where Rosa's brother is celebrating mass. Many are also the religious references in the film's Italian version: Rosa's brother's name is Samuele, while in the English-language version he is only 'her brother', with no first name. At the beginning of the film Rosa has a conversation with him about a friend who has become a bishop. Rosa reminds Charlie that 'God has not forgotten this place, as my brother's presence here demonstrates'. Samuele decides to risk his life when the Germans invade the village because 'a good pastor does not desert his flock'. Rosa thanks God for Charlie's courage; and even Charlie, the more seemingly immoral character, who abuses alcohol and cigarettes, is redeemed by Rosa and asks for God's protection towards the end of the film.

All of the female characters of the films banned by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico are to a certain extent the image of that immorality from which the Roman Catholic Church wanted to free the cinema: working women, prostitutes, singers and dancers, or wives who are tempted to betray their husbands (as in *Un turco napoletano* [1953]). The presence of prostitutes in post-war Italian cinema is striking and often 'the ultimate metaphor of capitalist consumption' (Wood 2006: 56)⁵. It is not a co-incidence that the three films included in the For All category by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, *Don Camillo* (1952), *Il ritorno di Don Camillo* (1953) and *Marcellino pane e vino* (1955), do not have female characters as their main protagonist and the female characters in the films are wives loyal to their husbands who live in their shadows and are mainly occupied in looking after their children. This traditional narrative—as Wood (2006: 56)

affirms—reinforces ‘a patriarchal order’, where ‘female action or ambition is subordinate to those of men’.

MALE AUTHORITY, PATRIARCHAL VALUES AND ENDANGERED MASCULINITY

The Kinsey report on *The Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* in 1948 alarmed American men specifically in relation to Kinsey’s treatment of homosexuality, defined for the first time as one of many aspects of a man’s sexual orientation. Kinsey was aware of the implication of his Statements in relation to Christianity, which according to him had up until then considered this aspect of sexuality as ‘abnormal and immoral’. Masculinity, however, had already been jeopardised in America during the years of the Great Depression, when unemployment and economic crisis had put at risk patriarchal values traditionally associated with workplace and the home (Connelly 2004: 34). It is within these two settings (the workplace and the home) that masculinity and its various forms will be defined and analysed in the American and Italian films taken as case studies.

Frank Sinatra’s character in *Pal Joey*—around which the film’s narrative revolves—is designed to express that dichotomy between male power exerted over women and masculinity in crisis, which seemed to have marked not only Sinatra’s screen persona but also aspects of post-war American maleness. Sinatra’s character is represented in the film in relation to his sexuality and his predator role. He is full of those ‘double entendres’ (*Pal Joey* XLIII/12 1958:120) that were part of his distinctive vocabulary which made constant reference to sex and prompted the Vatican to ban the film⁶. When he sees Linda (Kim Novak) going to bed with the hot water bottle he proudly affirms that ‘my girl doesn’t need one of those to get warmed up’. When the piano player tells him that when he can, he gives Kim Novak a hand, he says that ‘I can even give her two!’. When Linda (Kim Novak) wakes up after spending the night drunk on his yacht, he says that he is ashamed of himself because he has not done anything with her and when she asks him why he is ashamed of his good actions, he replies that it is ‘because I have always done so little of them’. *Pal Joey*’s sexual power and control over the female characters of the film is summarised by Sinatra’s lines when he wants to entrap Vera Simpson (Rita Hayworth) and convince her to open a nightclub for him: ‘There are those who have a way with horses, I have a way with women; you simply have to remember that you are a man and you were born to dominate them’. This self-assurance which defines male identity, the playboy type and gender roles is, however, in total antagonism with a different aspect of Sinatra’s screen persona in *Pal Joey*. While, since Laura Mulvey’s seminal essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, feminist film theory has traditionally associated male gaze and male dominance, and referred to women

as object of desire, in *Pal Joey* the male character seems also to occupy a position similar to the female protagonists of the other films here analysed. Sinatra is a singer and performer, an occupation that makes him the object of the female gaze. The popular sequence, where Sinatra sings 'The Lady Is a Tramp', shows Rita Hayworth as the viewer of an erotic spectacle and Sinatra as the object of the feminine look. When Pal Joey is on stage in front of his female audiences, he is referred to as 'a cad', 'a looker' and 'a charmer'. Such remarks are not very dissimilar to how Marilyn Monroe's characters are defined in both of her films discussed here, and Monroe's lines are often of a similar kind to Sinatra's. In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* Lorelei Lee affirms that 'at night Mr Esmond finds it very difficult to say no to me' and when she has to steal some compromising photographs from the private detective, she counts on her sexuality to be able to succeed: 'I'll take the photos: he's a man, isn't he?', referring to that 'animal magnetism' which even the youngest of the rich participants of the cruise seems to find in her. In *Some Like It Hot*, 'the ambiguous lines' criticised in the *Segnalazioni* (XLVI/15 1959: 159), are not just part of Zucchero's lines but also part of the two male characters' (Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon) who in their female roles will on the one hand admit to know that men only want one thing and that on the other will refer to women purely as objects of desire. It does not come as a surprise that Lesser (1991: 218) refers to Jack Lemmon's manners in *Some Like It Hot* as a version of Marilyn Monroe's behaviour with men: 'His response has the same kind of ingeniousness, sincerity and witty distance from the self that characterizes all of Marilyn's humorous roles. Not only has he become a woman; he has become Marilyn Monroe'.

As well as Daphne (Jack Lemmon's female character), Pal Joey (Frank Sinatra) is almost the male counterpart to what Lorelei Lee and Zucchero represent in the female world: the object of sexual desire. This is also evident, as McNally (2002: 18) states, in the swap of gender roles which takes place between Joey and Vera Simpson (Rita Hayworth) as a result of that male sexual objectification which places Sinatra in the 'feminised position of financial dependency'. Not only, in fact, does Sinatra's character accept his role of powerless lover in order to obtain possession of the nightclub, but he seems to have no control over his sexual life. His image as a playboy is weakened by Vera's sexual initiative and impenetrable confidence which contrasts with Joey's childlike powerlessness and new role of objectified male. At one point in the film, Vera calls him 'blonde' and this reference not only relates to the female cinematic association with what Dyer (1986: 34, 40) calls 'the racial hierarchy of desirability', and the imperialist approach on race images, obvious in Marilyn's film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. It also questions the playboy's role of male sexual dominator by referring to the character of the film with an adjective traditionally coupled with female characters, and also by positioning him as an erotic object, which makes his masculinity dubious (Penley and

Willis 1993: XVII). This approach, which visibly has the intention of disempowering the film's male protagonist, is also obvious from spatial and narrative aspects of the film. In the opening scene Sinatra immediately acts his role of a playboy who is after sex and who uses women for his own interests. His arrival in San Francisco is determined by the fact that the police are after him, as he has been with the underage mayor's daughter. Moreover, Sinatra's character in the film is not only more interested in Vera Simpson, because she is potentially more useful for his financial future, but is also dependent on her and her sexual haughtiness, to the extent that one has to wait until the very end of the film to witness Joey's emancipation from Vera's handling of his life and the restoration of his masculinity. It is not a coincidence that the ultimate playboy space (the bachelor's apartment) is replaced in the film by Vera Simpson's yacht. Joey is presented in the film in rented accommodation, a space which he cannot control because he doesn't own it. This is the same for Lorelei and Zucchero in Monroe's films. He uses the yacht as his bachelor's pad, which is what Zucchero does in order to win Mr. Shell's attention and Lorelei does in order to gain the male's interest. In all these films the place of seduction, in this case the yacht, does not belong to the seducers, who don't have the final control over the space or the situation. In all cases, in fact, they have to interrupt their sexual performance against their will. This lack of control and authority makes Sinatra's cinematic role in *Pal Joey* immoral because he tries to take advantage of the situation for his own benefit. It also subverts the relationship between masculinity and patriarchy, which by objectifying the male character in a performance context, jeopardises the traditional male role in society. This was obviously a peril to the Catholic Church, which needed to reinforce gender roles in a much more conventional way and underpin the more traditional and conformist idea of male authority.

Sinatra's image in *Pal Joey* is in stark opposition to Grant's Johnny Case in *Holiday*, and to a certain extent, also to Bogart's Charlie Allnut in *The African Queen*, both films totally appreciated by the Catholic *Segnalazioni*. The Catholic Church's positive reception for Humphrey Bogart's film was not just determined by the audience the American film star had with Pius XII on his way to Uganda and Belgian Congo in Central Africa to film *The African Queen*. Nor by the press interest towards Lauren Bacall, who followed Bogart in Africa to fulfil her marital role, helping out with the domestic chores. Not even by his satisfied comments on his wife's presence in Africa, when affirming that he was prouder of her than he ever was when he saw her on the screen, because she was in a woman's place (Meyers 1997: 239). The film was highly regarded by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico because of his 'best feelings'. In fact, despite initially presenting a screen persona of the tough, confident guy, who loathed emotions and typified manhood as power, by the end Charlie's character is redeemed by Rose, becomes a different man and is committed to marry her. They

even imagine a future together, with children to recount their adventures with. In a way, by saving himself from a life of drinking and solitude, Charlie reveals a different side of his character, becoming more in line with what an American was supposed to be:

Traditionally, the citizen has been an optimistic, problem-solving, responsible participant in a culture, with a sense of both social responsibility and individual self-reliance. (Susman 1989: 26)

In fact, not only Christianity and family values but also self-sufficiency and social obligation are shown in *The African Queen*. When the two central characters decide to blow up a German boat against all odds, it is through strong willpower. In a more individual way in *Holiday*, it is shown when Linda decides to help her sister to be happy. The identification of American as being problem-solving, responsible and self-sufficient becomes clear only at the end of *The African Queen*. It is, however, in the other film praised by the Vatican and highly appreciated by Italian audiences, *Holiday*, that the values of the U.S. citizen are totally represented by the main male character, Johnny. Johnny Case (Cary Grant) is the epitome of what Klapp (quoted in Dyer 1998: 47–48) in *Heroes, Villains and Fools*, defined as the good fellow.



Figure 6.7 Johnny Case (Cary Grant) daunted by his opulent surroundings in *Holiday*, courtesy Corbis.

He embodies the 'American ethos'. He is 'friendly and easy going; he fits in and likes people; he never sets himself above others but goes along with the majority'. Case is the opposite of Pal Joey, Lorelei Lee and Zucchero. In *Holiday*, Johnny falls in love with a woman without knowing that she is a millionairess; Johnny defines himself as 'a simple man of the people', whose humble origins—his father was the owner of a grocery shop—make him independent from financial stability and interested in a life free from

Johnny Case's detachment from money and success makes his future father-in-law define him as an 'anti-American' because he does not fit with the idea of the self-made man, as Johnny, the 'dreamer', refuses to climb the social ladder. However, he perfectly fits not just with the good fellow's attributes, but also with some of the spiritual values promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. He displays honesty, integrity and an interest in personal feelings, family and friends. He asks his future wife: 'I love you. That is what matters, isn't it?'. Johnny represents a 'breath of fresh air', as Linda defines him, which is appreciated by all the Seton siblings. However if, as Helford (2007: 103) affirms, John is not only the object of Linda's and Julia's love, but also the object of Ned's—Linda and Julia's drunken brother—'homoerotic desire', this did not constitute a threat for the Vatican, which approved the film without any negative comments. The position of the Vatican in this context can be a further example of how often more oppressive social institutions (such as the State and the Church) rarely show interest in repressing the homoerotic. As Eve K. Sedgwick (1985: 5) States, the homoerotic is, in a way, an intrinsic part of the homosocial continuum and therefore very rarely contained. The film was praised for the positive characters and values in the film. Those values, extraordinarily typified by Grant's Case, are also expressed by the character's close friends, the university professor Nick Potter and his wife Susan, who seem to act as parent figures to Johnny. The three characters are the manifestation of those social values such as family, friendship and a sense of community, which contrasts with what Julia, Johnny's future wife, and the Seton family embody. Julia, in fact, can be associated more with the female character portrayed by Marilyn Monroe. She is blond and her costumes are more alluring than those of her sister Linda (Katharine Hepburn), and her main interest is more with social status than with emotions. In a striking golden dress, she proclaims that 'making money is the most beautiful thing in the world'. She prefers a sumptuous engagement party to a cosy family gathering in her sister's playroom and she is glad that her rich father has already arranged her and her husband's future. Money is the principal motivation for the characters in *Pal Joey*, *Some Like It Hot* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and this was an aspect that the *Segnalazioni* found morally unacceptable. In contrast, it played an insignificant role for those characters that were applauded by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico.

When looking at the male characters of some of the Italian films banned by the Vatican, the issue of money is often associated with the male protagonists. In *Mambo*, Vittorio Gassman plays Mario Rossi, one of the main

characters, who is defined by his girlfriend Giovanna (Silvana Mangano) as 'a debt ridden crook'. It is Mario who convinces Giovanna to marry the count Enrico Morisoni, in order to gain financial stability from their wedding and take advantage himself of the situation after the count's death. This was strongly criticised in the *Segnalazioni*, because in this way the marriage is transformed into 'a cynical speculation on the spouse's misfortune'. Morisoni's illness creates the opportunity to disrespect the inviolability of marriage and to revert to the traditional role of the male protagonist as the breadwinner for his wife and children. In the film it is Giovanna who has a job, gains financial security and supports Mario economically. Moreover, Mario and Giovanna's illicit co-habiting, condemned by the *Segnalazioni*, is also the manifestation of Mario's resistance to that social integration identified with marriage. While marriage constitutes in the Proppian tale an important aspect of narrative closure, the rejection of it not only clashes with the Catholic expectation for any heterosexual relationship, but also 'personifies a nostalgic celebration of phallic, narcissistic omnipotence' (McQuillan 2000: 183). Resisting social responsibilities and integration makes Mario a totally negative character, who does not comfortably assimilate the traditional values of masculinity promoted by the Catholic Church and becomes therefore the expression of that self-centred narcissism opposed to the ideal male the Vatican wanted to reinstate in post-war Italian society. However by glorifying that phallic omnipotence, Mario responds perfectly to what Gilmore believes to be the essential factor in the construction of Mediterranean masculinity: honouring the penis and demonstrating phallic potency 'through erotic triumph' (1987: 16–17). It is, in fact, in the dichotomy between the two leading male roles that the Mediterranean masculinity and sexual performance are expressed. Mario's physicality and virility is opposed to Enrico Morisoni's fragility, weakness and impotence. Morisoni can provide Giovanna with the financial prosperity but cannot restore a social order based on fatherhood and paternity. His health suggests itself as the metaphor for the hopelessness of reproduction and fertility and therefore makes it impossible for him to be the ideal husband for Giovanna. This shift in representation of male sexuality, characterised by the absence of a virile post-war national identity, is opposed by Mario's character, who could ideally offer Giovanna a future of traditional family values, but he still lacks in the role of the main wage earner, which was conventionally associated with male protagonists. This also represented a closer representation of reality considering that up until the late 1960s, as Caldwell (1978: 92) states, 'Italy still had an extremely low rate of female participation in the workforce'.

Neither of the male characters in *Mambo* is able to provide Giovanna—or any woman—with two of the main values of any patriarchal family: financial security and reproduction. The issue of reproduction associated not only to femininity but also to male figures as an attempt to restore a more traditional and conformist social order can also be seen in relation

to the total absence of father figures in the films condemned by the Vatican and analysed here. Vittorio Gassman's role in *La donna più bella del mondo* shows a 'physicality and sexual energy which indicate his force and virility' but which again—as in the case of Mario in *Mambo*—do not culminate in fatherhood and paternity (Wood 2004: 139). While a desire to re-establish a more conventional patriarchal society was not exclusive to a post-Depression America, in post-war Italy fatherhood seemed to constitute the place where maleness could be reasserted. In fact, gender responsibilities were clearly defined in post-war Italian society. Raising children was the mother's main duty and fatherhood was not certainly associated with involvement in child rearing and family life. This does not seem to have changed in sixty years. According to research on men and masculinity in Europe today, 'traditional men may not see any need to engage in balancing home and work' (Hearn and Pringle 2006: 123). Moreover, a survey conducted in 2008 by the Italian National Institute of Statistics shows that the average time men dedicate to their families is forty-five minutes per day, only eleven minutes more than twenty years ago (Minardi 2008: 162). Fatherhood, therefore, maintains the traditional concepts of masculinity as distinct from the feminine role of active family participation and becomes associated only with sexual reproduction. Sexual procreation, as Reich (2004: 6) affirms, becomes the proof of manliness, and when the Mediterranean man 'does not publicly manifest the honour of masculinity through "virile performance" he is shamed, cuckolded, and feminised'. According to Wood (2004: 142), the younger generation of Italian actors were almost never fathers and represented that 'male power embodied by a certain type of masculinity, characterised by physical energy [. . .], personal magnetism or charm'. However, fatherhood and physical performance can be seen as two sides of how patriarchy asserts itself in the social arena. In Wood's thoughts, though, it seems more that the erotic triumph demonstrates the phallic potency but does not culminate in reproduction. In *La donna più bella del mondo*, Gassman plays the prince Sergei, in a display of physical attributes and sporting background which are indicated by Wood as a sign of the new post-war generation of Italian actors: Vittorio Gassman is presented demonstrating a physical presence and performing that agility and strength typical of what Grignaffini (2002: 203–204) refers to as the role of the actor as a 'hero-athlete' (see Figure 6.8). This athletic presence—shown especially in the sequence where Sergei is riding a horse and becomes for the first time the object of Lina Cavalieri's (Gina Lollobrigida) gaze—is in contrast with the other male characters of the film, especially the Tenore Silvani, Lina Cavalieri's devoted friend, whose physicality is symbolic of paternal feeling, rather than of sexuality.

Sergei's attitude towards women is at times also not dissimilar to Pal Joey's. When he returns to Paris and sees Lina Cavalieri at the theatre, he makes a bet with his male friends that he will be able to court the most beautiful woman in the world. His assurance—especially after one



Figure 6.8 Prince Sergei (Vittorio Gassman) confronting Lina Cavalieri (Gina Lollobrigida) and Mario Silvani (Gino Sinimberghi) in *La donna più bella del mondo*.

of his friends tells him that she has been admired by all men in Paris and she has refused them all—is not unlike Pal Joey’s self-confidence in winning women’s admiration. His statuesque presence in several film frames is similar to Sinatra’s charisma on stage in *Pal Joey*, transforming the male protagonist in the object of exhibition and female desire. Lina Cavalieri, in fact, is often caught on camera looking at Sergei: behind the theatre curtains, at the horse-riding show in Piazza di Siena, and even from the stage during her performance, while herself being the object of male gaze.

While the largest portion of the narrative is devoted to Lina Cavalieri’s performance and character development, the spectacle of the male body—if not as obvious here as it was in *Pal Joey*—is, however, still present in the film and characterised by Sergei’s need to prove his masculinity through a sexual act. Once the sexual act takes place, however, there is no sign of imminent fatherhood in the film narrative. What Sergei and *Mambo*’s Mario and Enrico represent is an incomplete masculine archetype, each of them deficient of one of the aspects composing the more

traditional patriarchal spirit. For Sergei and Enrico it is reproduction. For Mario it is financial prosperity and family stability through earning.

While *Mambo* (1955) was included in the Excluded category, as were Monroe's films, *La donna più bella del mondo* was amongst the Not Recommended, which were marginally less condemned by the Vatican, but were still in a category that would not allow them to be screened in parish cinemas. The Catholic journalist Renato Filizzola (2004)⁷'s clarification of the distinction between a film classified as Excluded ('which theoretically went against the Catholic moral principles'), and one deemed to be Not Recommended, ('casting a shadow on the moral and Catholic stature') still does not seem to account for some of the final decisions of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. If, for Filizzola, a film was to be in the Excluded only when it seemed to support values opposed by the Catholic Church—as *Mambo* did with 'illicit co-habiting' (XXXVII/8 1955: 64), or with double marriage, abortion and murder, then there was no rigorous justification for a film such as Mattoli's *Un turco napoletano* (1953) being included in the category. According to the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, this movie, which is based on a play by Eduardo Scarpetta, presented 'numerous scenes with scantily dressed women, ambiguous lines and crude gestures, and a series of events that render the film unacceptable from a moral point of view' (XXXIV/14 1953: 112). While some of the remarks expressed in the *Segnalazioni* were difficult to find when watching the film, what could have been dangerous, from a Catholic point of view, was perhaps how the film toys with the ideas of masculinity, screen virility and the lack of it. In the film Totò's character, Felice Sciosciamocca, takes the place of a Turkish eunuch sent to Don Pasquale in order to look after his wife and daughter. The man is allowed to spend time alone not only with the two women, but also with other female protagonists who rely on Sciosciamocca's total lack of virility. The false absence of masculinity becomes a threat to the morality of the female characters and to the honour of the family, which Schneider and Schneider (1976: 96) consider as one of the dominant cultural codes associated with Sicilian way of life, but which should be certainly extended to all Southern regions. As the women are the 'symbols of family worth' (Schneider and Schneider 1976: 96), the intrusion within the family setting of a man who can jeopardise their honour through the affirmation of his own sexuality becomes a real menace.

Family institution, honour and masculinity are all connected in an attempt to restore the initial equilibrium which the film achieves at the end, as Sciosciamocca's real identity is revealed and he is forced out of the house. The judgement given by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico raises what again seems to be the main concern of the Catholic Church: 'the fixation with sex, the obsession with eroticism, like an untamed beast, is only made tolerable by a rustic and syrupy delivery' (Argentieri 1999: 264) (see Figure 6.9).

It does not come as a surprise to notice the different approach to masculinity in the films praised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico.



Figure 6.9 Totò in *Un turco napoletano*.

Julien Duvivier's *Don Camillo* (1952) and *Il ritorno di Don Camillo* (1953) and Ladislao Vajda's *Marcellino pane e vino* (1955) are good examples. It is worth remembering here that Vittorio De Sica had the opportunity to direct the film but, as he was involved in making *Umberto D.* (1952), he declined the offer. When it came to financing the films, 'Umberto D. obtains a contribution of 16 million, whilst his contemporary *Don Camillo* 216' (Orfei 1975: 79). This information suggests the amount of support the Duvivier's film received from the Italian Government and confirms the degree to which pressure was exerted by the Catholic Church on filmmakers in order to make them adhere 'to the traditional values of religion, family and respect for those in position of authority' (Jäckel 2003: 236). The *Don Camillo* series is the story of the contrasting relationship between a Catholic priest, Don Camillo, and a Communist mayor, Peppone, and their life in a village in the Emilia Romagna region⁸. The film was a Franco-Italian co-production, a practice which by 1957 had already created over 230 movies (Jäckel 2003: 233). In *Don Camillo*, 'the political idyll had taken the place of the romantic idyll: the erotic note was completely absent from the first *Don Camillo*' (Spinazzola 1985: 199) and this was certainly an aspect that the Catholic Church must have seen favourably⁹. In fact, while the family has played a central role in the construction of Italian national identity, there was another aspect that linked family life with the

community and which became the theme of this film. Politics was the real passion that excited Italians and which made *Don Camillo* a very successful movie. It was, however, the social context of the film and the 'sentiment of human kindness', which was praised in the *Segnalazioni* (XXXI—Disp. 23 1952: 179). Don Camillo is a priest, not a saint, as Buzzonetti reminded the Catholic readers (Buzzonetti, RC 1952: 19). He has a special relationship with Christ, with whom he talks about his flock and his differences with Peppone. This device is used again in the other film praised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, *Marcellino pane e vino* (Castellani 1994: 73). This strong desire to promote Catholic values amongst a traditionally 'Red' province must have been obviously a note of merit for the Vatican. However, spreading Catholicism and reconciling with the communist enemy were not the only two positive aspects of the *Don Camillo's* films appreciated by the Vatican. The representation of a traditional family setting, the conventional portrayal of women and the presence of what Eve Sedgwick (1985: 1) describes as male homosociality are perhaps what was of greatest interest for the Catholic Church. If, as Sedgwick affirms, male homosociality is the basis of patriarchal masculinity in the bonds between men, in the two *Don Camillo* films this definition can certainly be applied. Don Camillo's and Peppone's exertion of power over women is expressed either by supporting that conventional patriarchal family which the Vatican was deemed to restore in Italy, as in the case of Peppone, or by making use of the religious authority to claim superiority over the female characters, as in the case of Don Camillo. Despite his constant fighting against religion, paradoxically, Peppone's domestic arrangements are the perfect example of the proper Catholic family: a wife loyal to her husband, living in his shadow and only occupied in looking after their children. This is expressed visually by framing the female character at the middle or background of the picture, never making her the centre of attention. While she is an important aspect of Peppone's life, she is often occupied with domestic duties in the background of the main action and at times she is only represented as a voice rather than an image checking on the male main character's needs.

Buzzonetti's description of Peppone, whose 'somewhat Stalin like moustache was not enough to alter the inner connotations of a fundamentally Christian soul', is noteworthy in understanding his partnership with Don Camillo (Buzzonetti, RC 1952: 20). The Christian qualities of Peppone and his Communist associates strengthen the bond with the Catholic priest and make the film so significant from a Catholic point of view. Peppone is a fervent Communist but he wants his son to be baptised by Don Camillo; he asks the priest to confess him; he calls Don Camillo to bless the opening of the construction of the House of the People and the Bishop to visit it at the end of the works. He shows his respect before the crucifix, he goes to mass and he relies on Don Camillo when he thinks he has committed a crime or when he has troubles educating his son. In this passage, Giacobelli explains the significant role played by Don Camillo:

For it has been said that the *Don Camillo* films, even thanks to their great commercial success, favoured the advancement of the middle classes towards the Left and anticipated the historical compromise in a light-hearted manner. Whilst the pastor Don Camillo always has an extra card to play with regards to the communist Peppone, whereby if you give him slightly more reasoning than necessary, he is always a little too shrewd and loyal, whereas Peppone who is not naive, doesn't become obnoxious or mean, but he is never entirely wrong. In short, these country communists are not exactly holier than thou, but neither are they the devils in disguise. (Giacovelli 1990: 32)

Peppone and the Communists are therefore positive characters. However, Don Camillo always has an extra card to play: he always wins his fights with Peppone. He succeeds in having one of Peppone's sons baptised with his name. He offers his help to correct a political speech by Peppone which is full of grammatical mistakes. He agrees to wait for Peppone's House of the People to be ready before he can launch the youth village, and by the end of *Il ritorno di Don Camillo*, for the first time the two clocks of the town strike together, as a sign of restored harmony. Peppone and Don Camillo's bonding expresses that homosocial aspect of masculinity which by exerting power over female characters reinforces and consolidates the male domination. It is not an erotic power, where the sexual act is reaffirmed by the physicality of the male protagonist. On the contrary, Peppone's persona is poles apart from Mambo's Mario or Sergei in *La donna più bella del mondo*. Virility and athletic nature are replaced by a masculinity which is reassuring, paternal and definitely not sexy. Depriving the male characters of their erotic power, eliminating completely any sexual reference in the female protagonists and drawing attention to male friendship and 'homosocial buddy relation' (Cohan 1997: 91) produces the effect of restoring order and control over the social settings.

The other masculine-centred film praised by the Church, *Marcellino pane e vino*, is similarly structured. Marcellino is a young boy who is found by a group of Franciscan friars, who, after a brief attempt to find his family, decide to keep him in the monastery. The film was praised in the *Segnalazioni* for its 'religiousness' and for the 'presence of the supernatural in the lives of the men' (XXXVIII/27 1955: 216). The movie shares several elements with the *Don Camillo*'s films but also pushes the boundaries of family settings and patriarchal values. While the strong presence of religion and the discussions with Christ on the crucifix are obviously common threads between the two films, the homosocial bonding amongst the friars, who function in a new patriarchal system, become the symbol of a purer form of fatherhood, deprived of the sexual act in order to procreate. The representation of female characters, which in the *Don Camillo*'s films had become already the expression of an attempt to reinstate that traditional gender balance, is in *Marcellino pane e vino* even more radical, by removing any sexual connotations from the few

female characters of the film and associating them with holiness. Finally, the presence of children is in both films symbolic of joy, innocence and purity, but also represents the final extolling of that act of procreation which is sterile in the films banned by the Vatican.

Both the Italian and the American films banned by the Vatican and analysed in this chapter are the manifestation of that allure of modernity so feared by the Catholic Church. The presence in these films of glamorised bachelors, who refuse to conform to the boundaries of marriage, and working women, who challenge domesticity by invading the public sphere, strengthens the view of a Catholic establishment uneasy with some aspects of modernity which Italian society was clearly showing. Restricting femininity to the private sphere and encouraging masculinity to be re-integrated within a set of more traditional values was what the Vatican attempted in the Fifties but failed to achieve. The success of these films amongst Italian audiences proves that the country was experiencing a transformation no establishment could stop, and the representation of that modernity on screen was a necessary requirement of Italian society.

Conclusions

By tracing the tension between economic (film industry), political (Government) and religious (the Vatican) pressures, this book has explored American involvement in the Italian film industry between 1945 and 1960. Hopefully it has contributed towards the reconstruction of a significant and decisive time in film history.

This book provides a model for understanding the strands that are in play when the popular ideological content of a popular cultural medium is of concern to parties that have allied but separate agendas of their own. In order to outline a full picture of the relationship between the United States, the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, the Italian Government, and the Christian Democrat Party, this book has been divided into different areas.

The analysis of the role of the myth of America and the process of Americanization which took place in Italy is vital in order to understand how the myth itself has changed from being an innovative element in Italian life during the Fascist regime, to become in the post-war period a reassuring presence linked to stability and the preservation of a social system which was being shaped after the Second World War. Italy's reconstruction of its national identity after 1945 was subjected to a concerted effort by both the United States of America and the Vatican to oppose any developments that seemed as though they might favour the political left. Issues such as the elimination of restrictions on international trade and the strengthening of private enterprise had an import in American foreign policy that was not paralleled in that of the Vatican. However, the two States shared a belief in the necessity of containing Soviet imperialism. This ideological approach was not the only common aspect shared by the Vatican and the United States. The presence of common themes in their cultural propaganda is evident from the analysis of American Congressional records, Department of State bulletins and the Vatican's official primary sources. These sources testify to their shared interests especially in relation to the role of entertainment and in particular the responsibility of cinema in relation to morality.

The American production companies, favoured by the Catholic establishment, benefited also from the Italian Government's overall strategic film industrial policy, particularly the inertia that was present in the process of deliberation and approval of any cinema legislation. This form of 'purposeful lethargy' enabled the Christian Democrats to build a strong coalescence of interests with producers, distributors, and exhibitors. It also helped provide the Vatican with an environment in which it could apply its cultural strategy more effectively within Italy. State censorship boards were supported by Roman Catholic organisations throughout the country. Such church bodies sought to keep under surveillance the loosening of a morality, an unsought development that was associated with some strands of American cinema. On the one hand it is not surprising that the ecclesiastic censorship exercised by official Catholic organisations resembles in many ways the principles of the American Legion of Decency. However, on the other hand, the Vatican and some of the representatives of the main Hollywood film production companies disliked open political propaganda in movies; this implied a common awareness of the power of cinema, where people believed entertainment more than any obvious political or religious intervention. Therefore, production companies—as well as the Italian Catholic establishment—preferred a non-overt, yet ultimately political approach of not using films as a means of communicating explicit political messages. It is necessary to say here that, while Hollywood in America did not mean only happy ending and optimism—as genres such as film noir presented a more complex portrayal of reality—Hollywood in Italy still offered a predominantly positive and reassuring form of entertainment.

For the United States the ideology of escapist entertainment enabled a return of investment. For the Vatican the consumer culture did not represent a problem as long as the image, which came with it, defended and promoted Christian values; this was because optimism and positive-ness were seen as key elements in the protection of family ideals endangered by a certain type of entertainment. When it felt the need to, the Vatican expressed adverse critical reactions to individual American films. However, this had little impact on the overall widespread screening of Hollywood films in parish cinemas and the Italian Catholic press from favouring particularly American movies, whose reception helped influence contemporary Italian society by offering soothing resolutions that were not to be found in the output of the Italian Neorealism movement. An analysis of the films accepted in the parish cinemas or excluded by the same circuit, reveals that, despite various attempts by mainstream Italian commercial producers to comply with the moral rules laid out by the Vatican, a wide number of Italian films were considered to be inappropriate to be shown to Catholic audiences.

The analysis of films carried out in the last chapter demonstrates the value of a comparative strategy, which aims to highlight the occurrence of themes and issues common to American and Italian productions.

Different kinds of generalised conclusions emerge here. The belief that the only significant contemporary Italian-made movies in the post-war period were films such as *Ladri di biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves) or *Roma città aperta* (Rome Open City) is false, a misperception that derives from these being internationally recognised works of art. When looking at the box office receipts (of the most popular films in the major 16 Italian cities) and at the moral literature, other films emerge and the obvious distinction between auteur versus mainstream cinema, which has often been a strong point of secondary literature, is no longer valid. The existence of a church-based system of assessing the moral content of movies provides an analytical tool that allows popular movies that were screened in post-war Italy to be categorised as either allowed or forbidden. This means that it is possible to compare what the Italian people enjoyed with what the Catholic Church felt that they should see.

It is clear that the Italian Catholic establishment's main interest in Italian cinema was to shape the reception of films rather than to determine the character of Italian-made films. While the Vatican aimed at advising film directors to bear in mind a Christian reality when making a film, they applied their principal efforts to trying to influence the reception of films, irrespective of where they had been made.

It is precisely in this framework that another aspect emerges very clearly. The case studies reveal that the portrayal of women in film was a significant issue for the Vatican. When pleasure in film viewing corresponded with female appreciation on the screen, the Vatican would firmly intervene. What the Catholic establishment did not want was for cinema to challenge the *status quo* of women and to subvert their role in society. Therefore any level of suggestion of sexuality and female empowered position was considered to be a threat to the stability of the Catholic family and any representation in films of traditional family settings was welcome by the ecclesiastic establishment. Films such as *Some Like It Hot*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* as well as *La donna più bella del mondo* (The Most Beautiful Woman in the World) and *Mambo* were subjected to adverse criticism by the Vatican. The association of female sexual transgression and power and the consequent male subordination to female pleasure represented a clear challenge to Catholic moral values, which could not be ignored by the Vatican.

This also leads to my final point on the relationship between Italian and American films. While it might be tempting to infer that the kind of popular Italian cinema analysed here can be seen as 'Hollywood in foreign dress' (Dyer and Vincendeau 1992: 11), the reality was to some extent different. Some of the Italian films were the expression of that process of glocalization, where the use of local practices and tradition were employed to create an Italian movie that both derived from, and yet also acted as a response to, an American-made film, as in the case of films such as *La donna più bella del mondo* (The Most Beautiful Woman

in the World) and *Mambo*. The use of the term glocalization in relation to national production is, in fact, a way to define more a cross-fertilisation process between the United States and Italy in terms of cinema and a strong desire to foster a sense of national identity through a cinematic tradition that was able to assert a degree of independence from American influence. On the other hand, works such as *Don Camillo* are critically relocated in the canon of Italian film as uncontaminated and autochthonous productions, that not only reflected the current social situation in Italy but also complied with the cinematic prejudices of the Vatican, the Italian Government, and the Christian Democrat Party.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

- 1. Film titles are provided in the book in Italian with their English distribution titles when available.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

- 1. See also Del Buono, O., and Boatti, G. (1998). “Bambini agli incroci per cento dollari”, *La Stampa* (27 August 1998).
- 2. Mammarella 1998: 72; Hughes 1953: 124.
- 3. Ellwood 1992: 15.
- 4. Duggan (1995: 162): “Levels of consumption in Italy rose dramatically in the course of the 1950s, so much so that by the end of the decade it was possible to regard the country as a model American-style consumer society”.
- 5. Foreign Relations of the United States 1948: 887.
- 6. Foreign Relations of the United States 1948: 850; see also Elwood 1996: 87–92.
- 7. Elwood 1996: 92; Mammarella 1999: 135.
- 8. *Table 1.1* Film Spectators in Italy, 1950–1960

	1950	1954	1958	1960
Film spectators (in million)	661	800	730	745

From Anica (1961). *Sommario statistico (1960–1961)*, p. 30.

- 9. See Bafle, P. (1986). In Magrelli, E. (ed.) (1986), pp. 74–75; Wagstaff, C. (1998). “Italian genre films in the world market” in Nowell-Smith, G., and Ricci, S. (eds.), (1998), p. 75.
- 10. See also Magrelli, E. (ed.) (1986), p. 126.
- 11. See Chapter 5 for figures.
- 12. Wood 2005: 13.
- 13. See Wagstaff, C. (1995). In Duggan, C., and Wagstaff, C. (eds.) (1995), p. 106; Nowell-Smith, G., and Ricci, S. (eds.) (1998), pp. 74, 80.
- 14. 80 days a year, but arranged per quarter so that Italian films were not shown only in the summer period, as audience figures were generally lower during the summer months.
- 15. Nowell-Smith 1998: 9; Wagstaff 1995: 108.
- 16. See Chapter 3 for further details.

17. Lowry, E. G., "Trade Follows the Film", *Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 198 (November 7, 1925), p. 12; see also Gundle, S. (1995), p. 169.
18. See also Gundle (1995: 86) and Brunetta (1994: 149–150).
19. Further information on Catholic productions and the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in Chapter 4.
20. Gundle 1995: 109; Wagstaff 1995: 93; Gundle 1990: 209.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Althusser 1971: 136–137; see also Lyle 1997: 1; Žižek 1994: 197.
2. Quoted in Eatwell and Wright 1993: 5.
3. Truman's message to Congress on civil rights—2 February 1948 in Truman Papers 1948: 121–126; Truman's message to Congress on civil rights—2 February 1948 in Truman Papers 1948: 121–126; Truman's annual State of the Union address to Congress—5 January 1949 in Truman Papers 1949: 1–7; Truman's message to Congress on civil rights—2 February 1948 in Truman Papers 1948: 121–126; Truman's address to Congress—12 March 1947 in Congressional Record, Eightieth Congress, first session 1947: 1980–1981; George F. Kennan's cable to the State Department—22 February 1946.
4. Truman's speech to the United Nations Conference—26 June 1945 in Public Papers of the President of the United States: Harry S. Truman 1945, Wash 1961, I 138–145; Truman's speech to the United Nations Conference—26 June 1945 in Public Papers of the President of the United States: Harry S. Truman 1945, Wash 1961, I 138–145; Truman 1956: 228; Truman's speech to the United Nations Conference—26 June 1945 in Public Papers of the President of the United States: Harry S. Truman 1945, Wash 1961, I 138–145; Truman's address in New York City's Central Park—27 October 1945; Truman's address in New York City's Central Park—27 October 1945; Truman 1956: 105, 119; Foreign Relations of the United States 1948: 550.
5. Truman's speech to American Legion Convention—15 August 1951 in Eighty-second Congress, first session, 1951: 10051–10052.
6. Saunders 1999: 1, 122; Kramer 1999: 305.
7. 'While the Government is spending [...] millions of dollars for the Voice of America and programs designed to sell Democracy to the rest of the world, our Government is leaving unused the most effective medium at its disposal—quality American pictures [...] in carrying the message of Americanism and Democracy to the rest of the world' (Copy of speech, 15 June 1949, quoted in Guback 1986: 250).
8. Guback 1986: 252; see also Pells 1997: 16.
9. In the same volume, Russell describes the values promoted by the American cinema: 'When we see an American film we know beforehand that virtue will be rewarded, that crime will be shown not to pay, and that the heroine, always faultlessly dressed in spite of incredible tribulations, will emerge happily to life-long bliss with the hero' (Russell 1951: 13).
10. Quoted in Kroes 1996: 23.
11. Parisella 2000: 115–116.
12. Discorso: 14 luglio 1945, in Baragli 1958: 88; Discorso: 30 agosto 1945 in Baragli 1958: 94.
13. Discorso: 14 luglio 1945, in Baragli 1958: 88; Discorso: 30 agosto 1945 in Baragli 1958: 95.
14. Discorso: 9 novembre 2002 in Giornalisti 2003: 17.
15. "La moralità degli spettacoli"—Documento della C.E.I., *L'Osservatore romano*, 1961.

16. *Il film ideale* 1955: 19; *Miranda prorsus* 1957: 8; *Il film ideale* 1955: 25; *Miranda prorsus* 1957: 9.
17. *Cine Annuario* 1948: 45; *Guida Cinematografica* 1963: XXX.
18. Statuto 17 settembre 1948, quoted in Baragli 1958: 100.
19. *Miranda prorsus* 1957: 24–25; Lettera della Segreteria di Stato 22 giugno 1955; Lettera della Segreteria di Stato, 6 giugno 1958.
20. Speech of Ellis Arnall, President of the Society of Independent Motion Pictures Producers, quoted in Guback 1986: 249–250.
21. Pells 1997: 213–214; Ellwood 1991: 36, 345; Saunders 1999: 286–289.
22. United States Department of State. (1948) Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XVIII, n. 467: 755.
23. Ellwood 1992: 196; Ellwood 2001: 27; Zamagni 1995: 78.
24. Foreign Relations of the United States 1948: 775.
25. Novak 1993: 47; see also Whitfield 1991: 91.
26. Truman in Department of State Bulletin 1947: 478, Vol. XVII, n. 427.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Unblocking: the possibility foreign films had—after World War II—to be shown again in Italy after the period 1938–1945.
2. Parisella 2000: 38–39; D’Attorre 1991: 142; Giovagnoli 1991: 221.
3. See also Franco, M. (1989: 43) and Parisella, A. (2000: 25).
4. Galante 1978: 114; see also Ventrone 1991: 147.
5. AC, seduta del 17/3/1947; DI sull’ordinamento dell’industria cinematografica italiana. AC, seduta del 17/3/1947, p. 3.
6. “Un saluto alle case americane” (BI 1/12/1945: 1). There were three different types of ‘renting’: *percentage renting*, where the distributor and the exhibitor would share all the profit and all the payments; *fixed price renting*, where the distributor, once he had received his lump sum, would not be involved in the advantages and in the risks of the exhibitor; *renting with a guaranteed minimum*, where the exhibitor had to guarantee the distributor a fixed minimum profit.
7. “Le case americane si mettono in cattiva luce” (BI 1/3/1946: 6).
8. “Il minimo garantito” (BI 15/3/194: 2); “Ancora del minimo garantito (... ma è l’ultima volta)” (BI 15/3/1946: 2).
9. Table 3.1 Italian Films Produced Annually

<i>Year</i>	<i>Film</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Film</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Film</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Film</i>
1931	12	1934	35	1937	32	1940	85
1932	19	1935	21	1938	68	1941	89
1933	34	1936	37	1939	79	1942	117

Quaglietti (1980: 245).

10. DI sull’ordinamento dell’industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 6/5/1947), p. 3598.
11. “Note” (BI 15/11/1945); “Il noleggio a percentuale col minimo garantito” (BI 15/2/1946: 3); “Il mercato dei film” (BI 1/3/1946: 3).
12. “Sblocco film esteri” (BI 15/3/46: 1).
13. “La situazione del mercato dei film” (BI 1/4/1946: 1).
14. “Lo sblocco dei film esteri” (BI 1/5/1946: 1).

15. An assembly elected on 2 June 1946 and comprised of 556 MPs with the intention of drawing up the Italian Constitution, which was first active on 1 January 1948.
16. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, sedute del 3/5/1947, 6/5/1947), pp. 3493, 3600.
17. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 3/5/1947), p. 3481.
18. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 3/5/1947), pp. 3482, 3488. We also must remember that Alfredo Proia, CD MP, who was strongly in favour of State funding, was also the President of ANICA.
19. Disposizioni sulla cinematografia (1962) (AGIS.); see also Quaglietti 1980: 50.
20. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 7/5/1947), p. 3660.
21. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 9/5/1947), p. 3748.
22. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, sedute del 3/5/1947, 7/5/1947), pp. 3485, 3664.
23. DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, seduta del 19/4/1947), p. 3076.
24. M.V. (1947), "Norme per la proiezione dei film" (BI 15-31/5/1947).
25. "Chi minaccia la cinematografia italiana?" (BI 15/3/1948: 1).
26. See also Quaglietti 1980: 52, 55; and Zanchi 1999: 87.
27. "Il doppiaggio dei film" (BI 1/2/1946: 4).
28. See also Zanchi 1999: 88.
29. *Disposizioni sulla cinematografia* (1962) (AGIS). 'Legge 26 luglio 1949, n. 448 (G.U. n. 173 del 30 Luglio 1949) Art.10, p. 35.
30. DL sulla costituzione di un fondo speciale per il credito cinematografico e disciplina della circolazione dei film esteri parlati in lingua italiana (SdR, seduta del 22/7/1956), p. 143.
31. DL sulla costituzione di un fondo speciale per il credito cinematografico e disciplina della circolazione dei film esteri parlati in lingua italiana (SdR, seduta del 22/7/1956), p. 144.
32. DL sulle disposizioni sulla cinematografia (CdD, seduta del 14/12/1949), p. 11; See also Zanchi 1999 and Miccichè 1999: 88.
33. DL sulle disposizioni sulla cinematografia (CdD, seduta del 14/12/1949), p. 7.
34. The situation had not changed in 1951–1952: a booklet published by ANICA on its activity refers that:

Table 3.2 Italian Film Production in 1951–1952

Five companies produced 4 films	20 films
Four companies produced 3 films	12 films
Eight companies produced 2 films	16 films
Eighty companies produced 1 films	80 films
Total	128 films

L'Attività dell'ANICA 1951-1952 (1952: 34).

35. DL sulle disposizioni sulla cinematografia (CdD, seduta del 14/12/1949), p. 12.
36. DL sulle disposizioni sulla cinematografia (CdD, seduta del 14/12/1949), p. 9; regarding the opposition of the exhibitors see Villa, M. (1950). "Il Presidente della Repubblica ci dà ragione" (BI 1-15/3/1950: 1).

37. For a complete summary of the several cuts imposed on post-war Italian cinema, see Argentieri 1999: 252–268 in Sanguineti (ed.) (1999).
38. Brunetta (1982: 13) gives us the figures of the expansion of national film production: 1945 (25), 1946 (62), 1947 (67), 1948 (54), 1949 (94), 1950 (104), 1951 (107), 1952 (148), 1953 (161), 1954 (201), 1955 (133), 1956 (105).
39. Dl sulla costituzione di un fondo speciale per il credito cinematografico e disciplina della circolazione dei film esteri parlati in lingua italiana (SdR, seduta del 22/7/1956). p. 150.
40. *Leggi e decreti* (1949), num. 958, pp. 3125–3126.
41. In an article by Forno (1955) “Dichiarazioni di Guglielmone sui rapporti italo-americani” (BI 17/12/1955: 1), the importance of the relationship between American and Italian producers had been explained by the CD senator Teresio Guglielmoni.
42. See also Bizzarri and Solaroli 1958: 127–128.
43. In a parliamentary debate, this issue was raised very clearly by the MP Alberto Fogagnolo even in relationship to the ENIC, ‘a State owned organisation’: ‘An American company—Fox, I believe—tried to invest £75 million in ENIC, in order to make co-productions. This meant that in ENIC cinemas Italian films would no longer be available’. (Dl sull’ordinamento dell’industria cinematografica italiana, AC, seduta del 6/5/1947), p. 3593.
44. “In porto le trattative italo-americane” (BI 15/4/1951: 3).
45. “Se son rose...” (BI 15/5/1951: 1).
46. See also Solaroli and Bizzarri 1958: 137, 228: accordo 12/4/1951, art. 10.
47. See Solaroli and Bizzarri (1958: 139–141) for a comparison of figures concerning the release of Italian films in America and of American films in Italy.
48. “Collaborazione” (BI 1-31/8/1951: 3). See also *L’attività dell’A.N.I.C.A. 1951–1952*: 70.
49. “Dichiarazioni di Monaco alla stampa americana” (BI 10/10/1954).
50. “Verso la rottura tra ANICA e M.P.A.A.?” (BI 26/11/1955: 1).
51. *Ibidem*.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Ginsborg 1990: 170; Parisella 2000: 38–39.
2. See Ginsborg 1990: 169; Marzano 1996: 103.
3. Cereda 1974: 136; see also Baragli in *La civiltà cattolica* 1956 Vol. IV quad. 2551: 51.
4. See Brunetta (1978: 431) and Gundle (1995: 107) for the role of the cinema as means of hegemonizing mass entertainment.
5. Atti del Capitolo Superiore della Società Salesiana—Gennaio—Febbraio 1953: 3.
6. The films made by the Catholic organisation Unitas in the years 1909–1911 must be also remembered—eleven (three films in 1909; seven films in 1910; eight films in 1911) (Ciaccio 1962: 98–99).
7. For a complete list of Universal’s films, see Ciaccio 1962: 135.
8. Vanzin, RC 1942: 33; Moresco, RC 1942: 128–129; “Luci di amore nel mondo”, RC 1942: 130–131; “Il Pastor Angelicus in America”, RC 1947: 5, and ‘Pastor Angelicus a Parigi’, RC 1948: 3.
9. See Argentieri and Cipriani 1961: 1536; Baragli, *La civiltà cattolica* 1956: 31.
10. “Tendenze dell’esercizio cinematografico cattolico”, RC 1952: 8.
11. “Conclusione di un annoso problema” (BI 15-31/3/50: 1); “Definita la disciplina per l’esercizio di sale cinematografiche parrocchiali” (BI 1-15/6/1950: 1).

12. Ministero dell'Interno—Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza—Divisione Polizia. Prot.N.10.15396/135000.1: 11 April 1951. Archivio ACEC.
13. "Le sale parrocchiali e l'industria proletaria di *Paese Sera*", RC 1952.
14. "Censura", *Cinema nuovo* 15/3/1958: 182.
15. "Revisioni cinematografiche", RC 1942: 109; Andreotti, RC 1952: 3.
16. Gianfranco Gori 1980: 12; see also "Revisioni cinematografiche", RC 1942: 109.
17. "C.C.C.", RC 1943: 66.
18. "Diritti e doveri delle sale cattoliche", RC 1950: 3.
19. Circolare della Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco—24 Luglio 1953: 3–4.
20. Relazione sull'attività delle Commissione Regionale Spettacolo e Delegazione Regionale A.C.E.C. 1 dicembre 1959: 2.
21. Lettera a Msgr. Albino Galletto—Padova 17 Febbraio 1954.
22. Lettera circolare n. 36 ai Direttori dei Servizi Assistenza —Prot.n.12770/SB/gc. 18 Aprile 1956.
23. See also "Censura e morale nel cinema" (BI 20/1/1954).
24. Galletto, RC 1952: 3; Galletto, RC 1953: 3.
25. The journal came out in 1946 on the basis of Rivista *di Letture* founded in 1904 with the aim of giving moral indication on books to Catholic readers and had already started from 1924 to include a cinema section.
26. Martin Ritt's *The Long Hot Summer* (1958) (Taddei 1958: 535–536), David Leans' *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* (1957) (Taddei 1958: 445–447), Billy Wilder's *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957) (Taddei 1958: 447–448), Edward Dmytryk's *The Young Lions* (1958) (Taddei 1958: 369–371); Anthony Mann's *God's Little Acre* (1958), Charles Saunders' *The Black Orchid* (1953) (Taddei 1958: 784–786) and Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life* (1956) (Taddei 1957: 377–379).
27. No further information has been found on this film.
28. Arra, RC 1946: 8–9; Arra, RC 1946: 3; "A.R.", RC 1946: 2; Damiani, RC 1960: 113; "A.R.", RC 1946: 2; 16; Debel, RC 1940: 100–103; "A.R.", RC 1946: 15; Debel, RC 1940: 145–148; Debel, RC 1940: 100–103; Conti, RC 1952: 17–19; Vazio, RC 1946a: 10–11; Verdone, RC 1953: 22–23; Dorigo, RC 1959: 133–134; Bruno, RC 1950a: 22–23; Saladini, RC 1955: 57–59; Ghelli, RC 1953: 8–11; Ghelli, RC 1957: 154–155; Luciolli, RC 1949: 7; Ruzskowski, RC 1952: 7.
29. "G.C.", RC 1949: 12; Ciaccio, RC 1960: 48–51; Natta, RC 1963: 100–102; Cecchi, RC 1977: 228–231; Santarelli, RC 1953: 5–9.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Ferraù, "La frequenza del pubblico alle prime visioni è determinante nel successo di un film?", BI 10/3/1955.
2. Table 5.3 Gross Box-Office Intake for Italian and American Films

Years	Italian	American
1950	24%	67,3%
1951	28,1%	63,3%
1952	33,1%	58,1%

(continued)

Table 5.3 (continued)

Years	Italian	American
1953	35%	57,3%
1954	36,2%	56%
1955	34,8%	58%
1956	28,4%	62,9%
1957	30%	58,9%
1958	32,6%	55,2%
1959	36%	50,7%
1960	41,2%	45,6%

(Monaco 1965: 2)

3. "L'Attività dell'Anica (1951–1952)", ANICA 1952: 61; Avetta, RC 1952: 22.
4. Ferraù, "Tirando le somme", BI 1955: 2; Ferraù, "A nove mesi data", BI 1956: 3; Ferraù, "Le prime visioni a raffronto con l'intero mercato nazionale", BI 1960: 2.
5. Normal screen (aspect ratio of 1:33:1) as opposite to the widescreen (aspect ratio from 1:66:1 to 1:85:1).
6. Ferraù, "Bilancio di fine anno", BI 7/1/1956: 3.
7. 'Widescreen image together with its stereo soundtrack on a single filmstrip' (Cook and Bernink 1985: 57).
8. Ferraù, "Tirando le somme", BI 27/1/1955: 2; Ferraù, "Italia e America prime nelle graduatorie degli incassi", BI 14/4/1955: 1.
9. Ferraù, "Nel mezzo del cammin...", BI 10/3/1956: 6.
10. Ferraù, "I film nazionali da un anno all'altro", BI 1959: 3.
11. Ferraù, "Consuntivo di dieci anni di programmazioni italiane", BI 1955: 1.
12. *La città del cinema (produzione e lavoro nel cinema italiano 1930–1970)* 1979: 41.
13. The most successful Westerns were: John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) in 1940, William A. Wellman's *Buffalo Bill* (1944) in 1947/1948, Cecil B. DeMille's *Unconquered* (1947) in 1949/1950 and Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946) in 1948/1949, which was the most successful of them all.
14. David Lean's *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1957) was at the top for proceeds in 1957 and Fred Zinnemann's *From Here to Eternity* (1953) had a profit of over 100 million lire in 1955.
15. The only American musicals which succeeded in attracting the largest audiences were: George Sidney's *Bathing Beauty* (1944) in 1948, Vincente Minnelli's *An American in Paris* (1951) which was one of the top ten in September/October 1952, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly's *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) in 1953, Stanley Donen's *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954) in 1955 and Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Guys And Dolls* (1955) in 1956.
16. Quaglietti 1991: 100–104; Altavilla 1949: 45.
17. Other successful films were Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939) in 1949 and Henry King's *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955) in 1955, and amongst the comedies: Ernst Lubitsch's *Ninotchka* (1939) in 1948, Michael Curtiz's *Life with Father* (1947) in 1947, Vincente Minnelli's *Father of the Bride* (1950) in 1950, Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952) which was one of

the top ten in 1952, Billy Wilder's *Sabrina* (1954), which in 1955 had a profit of over £100 million and his *Some Like It Hot* (1959) which was amongst the top films in the major Italian cities.

18. 'Quickly made motion pictures, usually produced to fill the second half of a double bill' (Belton 1990: 415).
19. Ferraù, "I 'Mattatori' degli incassi per la stagione 1958-1959", *BI* 12/9/1959: 3.
20. Spinazzola 1986: 85; Carpi 1958: 81–83.
21. "G.S.", *RC* 1952: 16–17.
22. Interview with the author.
23. Lettera della Pontificia Commissione per la Cinematografia: 1 June 1953, quoted in Baragli 1958: 123.
24. Brunetta 1978: 430; Brunetta 1979: 307; Bernardini 1981: 62; Ciaccio 1962: 112.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. A weekly section of the *Bollettino di informazioni*, which gave figures of box office intakes for the major Italian cities.
2. The film, despite being a Spanish production, was sold and considered to be an Italian film (Lizzani 1992: 201).
3. Rossen's ten-year membership of the Communist Party could have been a crucial factor in the Vatican's approach to the film (Neve 2005: 54).
4. Caldwell in Sieglohr 2000: 145; Ginsborg 1990: 174; Argentieri 1999: 264.
5. See also Hipkins 2006: 194.
6. Sinatra's accusation of being a Communist might also have played an important role in the Vatican's attitude towards his films (McNally 2005: 47).
7. Interview with the author.
8. Emilia Romagna was traditionally a left-voting region.
9. Spinazzola reminds the reader that in another Don Camillo film there will be a 'maggiorata fisica', but only as a contrast to the real role women had to have in society: 'In *Don Camillo e l'onorevole Peppone* (Don Camillo and the honourable Peppone) there will be a scene with "a physically endowed" woman dressed as a political militant depicted in the film as a hopeless passionate, a silly presumptuous girl with her head full of memorised slogans: the men crowd around her to devour her with their eyes whilst being sure not to take her too seriously; the women, on the other hand, choose very wisely to stay at home to darn socks' (Spinazzola 1985: 199).

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Interrogazione Parlamentare = IP

Proposta di legge = PL

Senato della Repubblica = SdR

DL sull'ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana (AC, sedute del 17/3/1947; 10/4/1947; 19/4/1947; 3/5/1947; 6/5/1947; 7/5/1947; 9/5/1947).

DL sulla costituzione di un fondo speciale per il credito cinematografico e disciplina della circolazione dei films esteri parlati in lingua italiana (CdD, seduta del 12/7/1949; SdR, seduta del 22/7/1956).

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DL sull'istituzione dell'Istituto nazionale Luce (SdR, seduta del 21/11/1950).

DL sulla proroga delle provvidenze stabilite per l'industria cinematografica nazionale (1396); e della proposta di legge di iniziativa del deputato Caroleo: proroga del termine per godere delle provvidenze previste dalla legge 29 dicembre 1949, n. 958, concernente 'Disposizioni sulla cinematografia' e dalla legge 29 dicembre 1949, n. 959 concernente 'Proroga di provvidenze a favore del teatro' (1249) (CdD, seduta del 25/2/1955; SdR, seduta del 23/3/1955).

DL sulle modificazioni ed aggiunte alle disposizioni sulla cinematografia (CdD, sedute del 20/3/1956; 21/3/1956; 22/3/1956; 23/3/1956; 24/3/1956; 26/3/1956; 27/3/1956; 28/3/1956; 11/4/1956; 13/4/1956; 17/4/1956; 2/5/1956; 3/5/1956; 4/5/1956; 9/5/1956; SdR, sedute del 4/7/1956; 20/7/1956).

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1. Some of the articles from AGIS are not complete in terms of year, number or page number, as they have been kept in the Archive of AGIS without a proper classification.
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3. The titles of the films are all in the Italian version as they were cited in the *Segnalazioni*. For their original titles, see the Filmography.

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